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EDITORIAL - Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara

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THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECT OF EASTERN MONASTICISM

- Dr. Thomas Spidlik

ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY - Dr. Patros Yousif

BOOK REVIEWS

NEWS & COMMENTS - Dr. C. A. Abraham & Dr. Wilson Ukken

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CONTENTS

Editorial - Dr. V. Pathikulangara	105
Mysticism in the Oriental Church - Dr. Thomas Spidlik	111
The Anthropological Aspect of Eastern Monasticism - Dr. Thomas Spidlik	120
Ecclesial Spirituality - Dr. Patros Yousif	129
Book Reviews	140
News & Comments - Dr. C. A. Abraham & Dr. Wilson Ukken	144

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Editorial

Thomas Christian Culture

"Christianity in India dates back to the days of St. Thomas, one of the original disciples of Lord Jesus. Since then, it has flourished here and added a new dimension to India's rich cultural heritage. With deep root in the soil, Indian Christianity has developed an independent personality of its own - Christian in religion, Oriental in worship and Indian in culture. This local character has been sustained and enriched over the last many centuries", said the president of India, Giani Zail Singh on October 26, 1983, inaugurating the *Paurastya Vidyapitham* at Kottayam. What is this *new dimension added to India's rich cultural heritage* by the Thomas Christians, the most ancient Christian community in India? This may become clearer only when one analyses the long history of cultural development in India.

Dravidians

Indian history has witnessed to the interaction of so many cultures and religions all through its milleniums. Even the most ancient inhabitants of India, the Dravidians, are said to have migrated from the Mediterranean basin. The world famous Indus Valley civilization is almost proved to have been predominantly Dravidian in general features. Still the scholars are of opinion that there were cultural contributions also from the Austroloids, Mangoloids and so on.

Aryans

Most probably the Aryans migrated to India around 1500 B.C. As they entered India from the north, slowly pushed down the Dravidians to the South. The radical differences between the North Indian and the South Indian languages are clear proofs of their different origins, probably from proto-Aryan and proto-Dravidian models.

Jews

Evidences abound for the existence of many Jewish settlements throughout the country from the 10th century B. C. At least at the time of Asoka, Aramaic, the language of the jews, was one of the important languages of communication in India. It is proved by the edicts of Asoka, promulgated also in Aramaic. It is almost proved that the first seven churches established by St. Thomas the Apostle in the first century A.D. were all in or near the then existing Jewish colonies in India.

Thomas Christians

In the first century A. D. there comes St. Thomas the Apostle, preaching for a radical reorientation in the existing life style, especially in South India. According to good sense and normal logic we may think that not only the natives but also the Jews who were of the same cultural and religious background as that of the Apostle, must have participated his sharing of Christ experience. Thus a community with their own existential situation, but witnessing to Jesus Christ as the only *Way* of salvation, which they themselves had experienced through St. Thomas the Apostle, was formed in India. The life style of this particular community is known to the world as *Mar Thoma Margam*, or the *Law of Thomas*. According to recent researches, there were Thomas Christians in several parts of India before the 16th century.

Islam

From 712 A.D. onwards there had been strong influence of Islamic people, who came from the Middle East, on the Indian subcontinent. From 1175 to 1857 the Muslims ruled over most parts of North India and several parts in the South. Even today more than twelve per cent of our population belongs to Islam.

Other Cultural Forces

Besides the above said cultural contributions, there are different groups of tribals in India, having their own social, religious, political and thus cultural background. Some of them such as the Gonds, Bhils, etc. in the North and central India have many similarities to the Dravidians in the South.

Scholars discuss also of the Chinese, Persian and African cultural influences in this subcontinent of India from the early centuries. We can never ignore the cultural contribution to India by the Parsis, Armenians, and so on, who have their own cultural synthesis.

In short, India is a land of cultures and religions. We cannot speak of a unique, uniform culture in India. Various cultures have contributed together to the cultural heritage of India. Just as we speak of the Church as a communion of Churches, so too we must say the culture in India or "Indian Culture" is an encounter among and mingling of several cultures. Each of them has its own identity and at the same time, it contributes to the national integrity. There can also be cultural assimilation which is good and desirable, and cultural annihilation which is painful and undesirable. It is only in this context can we understand the declaration of the Indian President, that the Thomas Christians also have *added a new dimension to India's rich cultural heritage*.

Mar Thoma Margam

In the 16th century during the encounter between the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese missionaries, there was much talk about the Law of Thomas and the Law of Peter. One of the ten points to which the Arch-deacon, the Administrator of the Thomas Christians, was forced to subscribe by Dom Menezes, the latin Archbishop of Goa, on the occasion of the so-called Synod of Diamper was, "to confess that the Law of Thomas be the same as the Law of Peter". From this context we understand that these "Laws"

signify the Christian life style of the Thomas Christians and that of the Latins.

During the first decades of the contact between these two Christian communities, these "Laws" do not appear to have been cause of conflict between them. At several times they had even intercommunion in the Sacraments, especially, in the most holy Eucharistic celebration. Gradually, the Portuguese missionaries understood that the Law of Thomas is an obstacle to achieve their purpose of converting that indigenous Church to the ways of the western Latin Church. Hence they started to label it as heresy and opposed to the Law of Peter. But, from the fact that the Thomas Christians received the Portuguese as their own brethren in faith, and that they showed great attachment to the See of Peter, anybody could infer that they were in no way opposed to the Law of Peter.

What was this Law of Thomas which was never opposed to the Law of Peter, and at the same time different from it? The Law of Thomas, namely, the Rule of Thomas, appears to be a western interpretation of the *Mar Thoma Margam*. *Margam* is a Sanskrit word (now also used in many other Indian languages), which signifies the 'way of life' or the life style. Thus *Mar Thoma Margam* is the style of life bequeathed by *Mar Thoma*, St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus. In this connection, we recall the response given by Jesus our Lord to St. Thomas, who asked, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?, i. e., "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (*Jn* 14, 5-6). In short, *Mar Thoma Margam* is the particular style of Christian life that the Thomas Christians were leading in India. It is this that the President of India qualified as, "Christian in religion, Oriental in worship and Indian in culture". This means that the Thomas Christians, although they committed themselves completely to Jesus Christ and celebrated their faith according to the Eastern style of Christian worship, remained authentically in their own cultural situation in India.

In this connection, we remember gratefully our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, who too recognized and declared that the Syro-Malabar Church is "Eastern and authentically Indian"... "which for centuries has been a marvel of Christian witness in fidelity to its primitive (early) faith and to its legitimate traditions". This he did in his official speech to the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara bishops on August 29, 1980, during their "ad limina" visit to Rome.

Vatican II on this

It is also useful, in this context, to recall the explanation of a Rite or an individual Church given by Vatican II. An individual Church or Rite is described as a particular style of Christian life. It includes the liturgy, spirituality, theology, administrative system, mysticism and monastic traditions, social and political situation, and so on. It is a spiritual tradition, universal and particular, which can be linked to any given situation. Vatican II has expressed this in several of her documents such as, *Lumen Gentium*, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Christus Dominus*, etc. All these documents have been several times quoted in the columns of *Christian Orient*. Hence I do not like to repeat them. *Lumen Gentium*, one of the fundamental documents of Vatican II has made this vision of the Church very clear in n. 23 saying, "different Churches ... whilst safeguarding the unity of the faith

and the unique divine structure of the universal Church, have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony."

Post-Vatican II Ecclesiology

Post-Vatican II ecclesiology has already clarified this reality of the Church as a *communion of different individual Churches*. The universal Church has no independent existence but through the individual Churches. Each of these individual Churches is the *Church of God* in its fulness, equal to each other and enjoy its own autonomy and freedom. Still, they are all united in faith and Sacraments; and the visible symbol of this unity is the Pope, successor of St Peter the Apostle.

The Thomas Christians in the 16th century were fully aware of this unity and diversity in the Church of God in Christ. But the Portuguese missionaries who came out to conquer India in the counter-reformation spirit were not at all conscious of this reality of the Church. Everything except that of the Latin Church was heresy and schism for them. Hence they tried their best to convert the Thomas Christians to the ways of the Latin Church. It is amazing indeed to see that even today after Vatican II, when all speak highly of ecumenism and dialogue, and of human freedom and liberation from oppression, the Latin Ordinaries in India show themselves the true successors of the 16th century Portuguese missionaries. The recent developments in the case of the high level Papal Commission for settling the inter-ritual problems in India force us to think in this line. How did Archbishop Henry D'Souza, the greatest anti-Oriental in India, manage to creep into that Commission even after the list of its members had officially been finalized? At least one Patriarch or Major Archbishop from among the Orientals could be included in it while several Cardinals of the Latin Church are included! Of course, we Orientals obey the Holy See; but at the same time cry for the minimum justice!

The Thomas Christians who, according to the national leaders and the highest civil authority in India, have "added a new dimension to India's rich cultural heritage", are left today to the mercy of the Latin bishops who inherit and perpetuate a foreign colonial heritage.

Recent Development

In this connection, we cannot but discuss a recent development among the Thomas Christians themselves. Some of them in their enthusiasm for inculturization have begun to speak ill of the Chaldaic or Semitic elements in their Christian culture. They think and speak of a first century indigenous (namely, purely Indian, having no foreign influence) Thomas Christian culture and a 5th century Chaldaic or Semitic imposition. According to them, this 5th century imposition was as bad as, if not worse than the 16th century western imposition by the Latin missionaries. Hence they argue for a pure indianization, removing the Chaldaic or Semitic and Latin elements among the Thomas Christians.

Leaving aside the revelational importance of Semitic culture for Christianity and the apostolic link between the Indian and Persian Churches, let us consider now only the cultural and national links between India and Persia. I would also refer those who speak ill of Semitism in favour of Indianness to what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India, has to say on this in his *Discovery of India*.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

According to Nehru, India had cultural relations with Persia and Mesopotamia (present Iran and Iraq) even before the Indo-Aryan civilization, namely, even before 1500 B. C. In the course of time Persian became the court language of India and so remained right upto the beginning of the British period. All the modern Indian languages, both Northern and Southern, are full of Persian words. He had no doubt on the opinions of modern scholars that the Indus Valley civilization and the contemporary civilization in Persia and Mesopotamia were in close contact.

"From a period prior to the seventh century B. C. and for ages afterwards there is some evidence of relations between Persia and India through trade, especially early commerce between India and Babylon which, it is believed, was largely via the Persian Gulf", writes Nehru in the same book. According to other evidences, in those days, the sea routes around India were all controlled by the South Indians, especially by those who were along the Malabar coast. Hence, the close contact between the Malabarians and the Persians, at least from the seventh century B. C. is substantiated.

According to Nehru only very few people in the world had entertained such ancient and continued close relationship to the Indian people as the people of Persia, which resulted in mutual enrichment.

"Then came the British and they barred all the doors and stopped all the routes that connected us with our neighbours in Asia", bewails Nehru. "This sudden isolation from the rest of Asia has been one of the most remarkable and unfortunate consequences of British rule in India", he continues to write. "World developments and common interests are forcing Asiatic countries to look at each other again. The period of European domination is passed over as a bad dream and memories of long ago remind them of old friendships and common adventures. There can be no doubt that in the new future India will draw closer to Iran (old Persia) as she is doing to China", Nehru's wish and exhortation, perhaps, to the citizens of Independent India.

Nehru concludes his discussion on the relation between Indians and Persians (Iranians) quoting from the speech of the leader of an Iranian Cultural Mission to India at Allahabad. "The Iranians and Indians are like two brothers who, according to a Persian legend, had got separated from each other, one going east and the other to the west. Their families had forgotten all about each other, and the only thing that remained in common between them were the snatches of a few old tunes that, after a lapse of centuries, the two families recognized each other and were reunited. So also we come to India to play on our flutes our age-old songs, so that, hearing them, our Indian cousins may recognize us as their own and become reunited with their Iranian cousins".

How beautiful is the expression of the first Prime Minister of India. Shall not the Thomas Christians, especially, the Syro-Malabarians or better the Chaldeo-Indians think in these terms? The Chaldeans of Iran and Iraq (now also in other nations) are their own cousins, separated from them by the western missionaries in the 16th century. Now the Thomas Christians are freed from that undesired bondage. Shall they not accept again their Chaldean cousins and be reunited to them? Why not they make a common effort to make researches into their liturgy, spirituality, theology and discipline, and thus to their common life style or culture itself, and contribute positively both to their respective nations and to the universal Church? Some of the Chaldeo-Indian or Syro-Malabar bishops were afraid of Chaldean rule over them. Such fear has become a legend today. Also because of the political and

economic situation there, some may not feel sympathy with the Iranians of today. But we are speaking here only of the cultural relations which we can never disown.

Conclusion

In short, the Thomas Christians, just as many other Indians, were in close relation to their brethren in Persia and Mesopotamia from the very beginnings. Hence the Chaldaic or Semitic elements in their life style are not something foreign, imposed upon them in the fifth century by the Chaldeans, as some people's conjecture goes. On the other hand, such elements are really "Indian" as they are in the case of many other Indians. Besides, the culture of revelation is something unique and sacred for every religion. Naturally, Christianity can never forget or completely abstract from the Semitic culture, in which she received her revelation. I do not dare repeat here, the discussion on the intimate relation which existed among the "Thomite" Churches in the early centuries, namely, among the Churches in India, in Persia (Iran), in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and in Edessa, through their common Apostolic heritage. All these Churches, directly or indirectly, considered and venerated St. Thomas the Apostle as their Father in faith.

The *Thomas Christian Culture* which is a beautiful synthesis of several cultural elements, Semitic, Dravidian, Aryan etc, is in India for the last 2000 years. It has indeed contributed to India's rich cultural heritage. The present Thomas Christians have to enrich more and more India's cultural heritage, not by imitating, and very often aping, some Aryan or other customs and practices, but by being faithful to their own cultural synthesis, which is "eastern and authentically Indian". When moving to the missionary areas, they have to assimilate from the local cultures in order to enrich themselves. The Thomas Christians are not jumping into the darkness, leaving out whatever they are, when moving to the mission fields; nor they are to simply imitate the missionary methods employed hitherto by the Latin missionaries. Unlike the Latin missionaries, they have an authentic Indian Christian Culture with them. If they are conscious of it, and have studied in depth about it, they can easily penetrate the Indian masses. Hence, if the Thomas Christians themselves and others in India were to discern their own contribution to the "Indian Culture"!

We are really grateful to all the contributors of this issue. Some of them are already known to our readers. Rev. Dr. Patros Yousif, a Chaldean, is today an ordinary Professor of Chaldean Liturgy and Syriac Patrology both in the Catholic Institute of Paris and the Pontifical Oriental Institute of Rome. He leads us to the depths of East Syrian Spirituality. Rev. Dr. Thomas Spidlik, a Checkoslovakian, is the Professor of Spirituality in the Pontifical Oriental Institute of Rome. He teaches also in the Gregorian University and Theresianum in Rome. He leads us to the Mystic and Monastic traditions in the East. Fr. Gabriel Bunge from Switzerland introduces the topic Mar Isaac of Niniveh and his relevance nowadays. Rev. Dr. C. A. Abraham, Director of Kerala Centre for Christian Higher Education comments on the Orthodox Syrian Statements on Pope John Paul II.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has most willingly collaborated with me on this issue.

Dharmaram College, Bangalore
September 8, 1986
The Nativity of Jesus' Mother

Editor
Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI

Mysticism in the Oriental Church

During the time, I was studying spirituality under my predecessor Fr. I. Hausherr at the Oriental Institute in Rome, I asked him once: "In what sense should I use the term mystic?" He answered: "In any sense you like. There is no possibility to know what it means, *lasciate ogni speranza!*" It happened more than thirty years ago.

But in recent times, between the years 1950–1980, as A. Solignac notes in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualite*, the attitude to mysticism has deeply changed. The terms such as *contemplatio acquisita* and *contemplatio infusa* are not anymore in use. Even the distinction between "asceticism" and "Mysticism" becomes problematic. We remember that the term 'mystical' was reserved for the highest peaks of the spiritual life, for "via unitiva", or even to the "extraordinary phenomena of the interior life".

(J. de Guibert).

Therefore, most of the ordinary Christians were considered excluded from the mystical states and they were even dissuaded from reading mystical books. Sometimes even the novices of various religious societies were forbidden to read such books. This situation has changed after the Second World War. The classical mystical treatises have been edited and translated into modern languages and propagated among the people. After the year 1950, the West began to take notice of the "eastern meditations" of yoga, of zen, and even the Christians began to practice it. Automatically a question arises: is mysticism possible outside the Christian religion?

From their point of view the experimental sciences (psychology,

sociology) compel us to reconsider some mystical phenomena as levitation, ecstasy, etc., considered till now as supernatural. But the most important fact is, that theology today does not believe in a precise distinction between scholasticism and mysticism. Mystery belongs essentially to the Christian truth. Take away the mystical element and theology becomes a rationalistic "technology" (the term is of Gregory of Nazianzus).

A short historical consideration is necessary for the comprehension of the problems and the terms. It is interesting that V. Siloviev, in order to introduce the question historically, begins with India. It is for him the "country of awakening". In what sense? The old religions and philosophies professed a cosmic dualism, just as it is in the fairy tales. There is a world of good beings and another of evil beings. Man can choose to join the one or the other, but he cannot change; a sorcerer remains a sorcerer and a good princess a good princess. The "awakening" of India is in the discovery that these two worlds are not outside in the cosmos, but within man. In him we find the world of good, the spirit, and of evil, the flesh. The choice between the two worlds is interior, in man. The spirit is divine. To choose the spirit and to renounce the flesh means to pass from this world to God through asceticism, abnegation.

Greek philosophy, later, tried to add some metaphysical and psychological determinations to these terms, the spirit and the flesh, but the principal idea remains the same: by means of asceticism to renounce the flesh and to live in the spirit. What advantage does it have? The spirit is

divine. Therefore the life according to spirit is divine too.

Aristotle explains it by distinguishing three kinds of life: utilitarian, political and contemplative. The first is the utilitarian. Most people work for their necessities: to eat, to be nourished and so on. Are they happy? Surely not, because they need continually something else. And who needs something, confesses that he is not happy. The second kind of life is political: it means a life for the service of others. It is on a higher level, but even these people are not happy; the only reward that they have for their work is the gratitude of the others and that also is rare.

The third life the contemplative, is the best. A contemplative man uses his best faculty, that is, the mind, the spirit, and occupies his mind with the best object which can be, that is with God. Therefore true philosophy, contemplation (in the Greek, *theoria*) is the elevation of the mind to God. This is the only happiness of man. We can think in this context of the Christian principle: *vita contemplativa est magis perfecta quam vita activa*. We find it even in canon law. But is it Christian or Aristotelian?

This definition of philosophy was taken into our catechism as the definition of prayer. It was Evagrius who introduced it in our tradition. But this definition is very problematical. We have no doubts that Christians try to elevate their mind to God. But only mind? Even the hands! The Bible and the liturgy say: Elevate your hearts! It means more than mere mind, intelligence. But another problem is more important. Aristotle and the Greek Philosophers in general suppose that the mind is divine; it is at home in the world of God, therefore it is within our possibility to elevate the mind to God. Even the Greek Fathers speak often in this

manner. The nous, mind, they often say, is a divine faculty. But soon a necessary clarification came. It was in the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, during their discussions with the Arians, in the writings against Eunomius.

The discussions were not so easy as one could imagine, because the Arians were very sharp thinkers, strong in their reflections. Their arguments were mostly speculative. How do we answer their difficulties? The last argument of the orthodox Fathers was this: with the mind you can build plenty of rational constructions, many ideas which seem theological. But they are useless. Our human mind cannot reach God because he is transcendent, the divine life is mysterious. Whoever tries to capture the infinite God in the finite human concept is a "technician", not a theologian. St. Gregory of Nazianzus was sometimes so tired by the rational discussions that he exclaimed: This people would do better to speak of horses and women and not to discuss the most Holy Trinity. In other terms: we can speak of rediscovering the mystery in Christian spirituality.

The results of this way of looking at the mystery are especially three: (1) the new apologetical treatises based on the principle: we know that God is, but we don't know what he is. We observe his activity but we are ignorant of his essence. (2) The character of the eastern liturgies is more and more mystical mysterious. (3) From this time we have the first mystical treatise. The most important is, without doubt, the *Life of Moses* of St. Gregory of Nyssa. The ascent to Mount Sinai (which later became in the West Mount Carmel) is a classical symbol of the mystical ascent of the soul to God.

Should I explain it in a few words?

Let us imagine a allumage. There is big plain between the mountains. The people with their families, their herds and flocks rested on this plain. Did they see God? They saw the lightning and heard the thunder. So they began to fear Yahweh. It means the first step on the way of perfection: the fear of God-the beginning of the salvation. And it is even the first step to contemplation, the first knowledge of God. We don't see God as person, but we perceive his power, it is like the hand of God.

Gregory of Nyssa gives us a charming example: the bridegroom who comes to see his bride during the night. In ancient times the matrimony in the Orient was an affair of the elders. The couple were not consulted and the bride was hidden. But the young are always curious. They both desire to know each other. So during the night the bridegroom went secretly to the window where the bride slept. He stretched his hand through the window and the bride took it. And from this hand she got some idea, to guess how the man was. We have a similar idea of God, when we observe the works of God, his hand.

But then comes the second step to God. It is the way of those who aspire to perfection. It is Moses. He begins to climb the mountain, step by step, higher and higher. We can see it on the beautiful mosaic in Ravenna. This ascent symbolises what is called in the tradition "positive theology", the elevation of the mind to God. The man begins to study and to pray and every day he learns something new about God. So he is every day wiser, wiser than all scholars of this world. Platonic philosophy had pursued the same scope.

How high can man ascend? On Mt. Binal Moses went at one moment to the top. He could not go higher. In the study of "positive theology" we notice an analogical situation. We

can't learn more. We find ourselves in the situation of Goethe's Doctor Faust, who says: "you have studied philosophy, you have studied theology..." And now? Moses stays on the top of Sinai and God is not there. If he makes one more step, he will fall into the abyss, the precipice. He feels giddy.

But at the same time the third step of the knowledge of God begins: "negative theology". It is the evidence: God is more than we can know of him. In the West Cusanus speaks of the *docta ignorantia*, a learned ignorance. At the outset of theology we admit easily our ignorance. Speaking of God we know neither this nor that and we are not ashamed of this. We say, later on I will learn it, later on I shall understand. In that moment of "learned Ignorance" we confess, here exists no "later on". We shall never know God, we will never understand him, because he is greater than everything that man can know. Is that a pure ignorance? No, it is science. To know that God is greater than science is, in theology, a very important degree of science. It is an affirmation of God's transcendence, inaccessibility, one of the first bases of the biblical revelation. The theology becomes "apophatic", negative, affirming what God is not rather than what God is. He is invisible, inaccessible, incomprehensible, etc.

Evidently we can't finish here at this step. It would be the same as to confess, that the human journeying towards God is a tragedy, a fruitless experiment. But what is to be done?

Moses stays on the top of the Mount Sinai, he cannot go higher, and God is not there. In the biblical narration we read that there was a dark cloud which separated man and God. How can we penetrate into this cloud? If man cannot go, he should have the possibility of flying away.

And this possibility of flying, fortunately, he has. He uses the wings of charity and it is through charity that he knows God who is charity. It is the way or rather the flight in darkness. The light, that is the intelligence, serves him no longer. But darkness, itself, becomes for him a great light: charity knows everything, all that is inaccessible to reason. Pascal says: the heart has its own reasons which reason does not know!

But how can we explain it better? Let us imagine once more Moses staying on the top of the Mountain: God is not there. But he desires him, he loves God passionately. He does not see God, but he experiences the greatness of his own passion which enlarges his heart. And through the breadth of his heart he knows the greatness of God. Man grows spiritually in the manner in which his charity grows. To know God in charity and through charity is the fourth step of knowledge: the "mystical theology."

Once more briefly: we have distinguished four steps of theognosia: 1) through the fear of God, (2) by means of the positive theology (3) the negative, apophatistical theology, (4) the mystical theology.

Once when I proposed this scheme in a class, I asked the students their meaning. One said to me: It is too clear to really explain the complex reality of mysticism. Moreover, there seems to be no place for Christ and the Holy Spirit. How could it be typically Christian?

I admit this difficulty. And not only that. I no longer believe that four degrees are in the right order even though this is generally accepted. I would place the third step in the first place. Apophatism is, I believe, the basis of every religion and it has many degrees. It is present even in the sense of simple people as fear of God. It means: God is something

different than man, his life is not our life. He is living on a mountain, in heaven. No one can resist him, so we must fear him.

The second degree of apophatism is the realisation that God is not visible. With the bodily eyes nobody succeeds in seeing God. This conviction was very strong among the Greek Fathers, so they considered as suspect all visible apparitions. There is a famous apophthegma: "Who says that he has seen God, has seen his own phantasy. Or another: Blessed are the eyes which have seen an Angel. Answer of the spiritual father: More blessed who has seen his own sin!"

This second degree of apophatism is common to the Greek philosophers and to the Fathers of the Church. God is not in the visible world. Origen writes against the "anthropomorphism" the simple people, who imagined God to be in the form of man. But the Cappadocian Fathers, as we have pointed out, go further, proceeding to the third degree: apophatism of the intellectual ideas. God is not even there, he is higher. He can be reached only with wings of love, in the darkness.

But was this meaning generally accepted? Precisely here, it seems, we can establish an essential difference between the two tendencies of mysticism. Not all profess the mysticism of darkness. There is also another current: the mysticism of light, which seems to be contrary, if not contradictory, as darkness and light are.

The first author here is Evagrius, whose terms are typically platonic. As a Greek he could not imagine that man should abandon, go outside of, his mind. The mind belongs to the definition of man, he is a rational being. On the other hand, he accepts like the Cappadocian Fathers, that no human concept, no idea can express God. The concepts are limited, God is

illimited. What is one to do? To progress in the knowledge of God proceeds in this manner. First, we must renounce all imagery. No sensible image is able to represent God. In the second degree, we begin with the purification of our ideas of God. They are too restricted, too narrow. We must enlarge them, having larger and larger ideas, till all concepts disappear. The mind remains pure, naked, without ideas, and, consequently sees the pure light and the pure light is God.

If the first scheme is mysticism of darkness, the second is a mysticism of light. Through Pseudo-Dionysius the first mysticism began to dominate the West, especially in Carmelite spirituality, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese. The second was more familiar to the hesychasts on Mount Athos and thanks to Issak the Syrian, to Syrian spirituality.

Now if we ask how it is possible to have two contradictory expressions to explain the same mystery of Christian experience, I think we must return to the original objection: It seems that in the schemes there is no place for Christ and for the Holy Spirit. Or is there?

Let us try to examine this question in the mysticism of darkness, in its highest degree: the knowledge of God in love, meaning the desire of God: How great must be He, who is so strongly desired! This moment is often described in the mystical literature of all times, Christian or non-Christian. According to the mystics, the desire of God, in the Greek, *eros*, has the most capital function in the vision of God. But there is a contradiction: can a man be happy only through desire? Is it not hell to desire that which gives no answer?

Christian mysticism cannot be only an elevation to God, with the mind or with the loving desire, there

must be a movement from the other side too, from God who is descending to man, revealing himself, giving himself.

Thus there happens to be a meeting from both sides: between man and God, between the human *eros* and the divine *agape*. If *eros* means "to desire", the *agape* says "to give", to communicate.

"The way in which God communicates himself is only one: through Jesus-Christ. It is certainly not casual that Christian mystics, even when they speak in abstract terms, had a warm devotion to the person of Christ and this devotion manifests a special aspect: devotion to the Cross of Christ.

But how do we place the mystery of the cross in the schemes we have exposed? Gregory of Nyssa helps us, through some very interesting texts.

Remember that before entering in the darkness one must renounce his intellectual activity. It is easy to say. We have seen that Evagrius did not believe that it was possible. For Gregory of Nyssa it is possible, but is an intellectual death. The man who starts thinking is spiritually dead. To renounce his own thinking is the highest possible renunciation. At this moment Gregory of Nyssa remembers the text of the Bible: Nobody can see God and remain alive (cf. Is. 6,5), to see God means to die. But now Gregory draws from it an opposite conclusion: the man who spiritually dies, sees God. The renunciation of intellectual activity is an interior martyrdom. But it is for the sake of Christ and in Christ; it is immediately followed by a spiritual resurrection: the eyes which were voluntarily closed are immediately opened in order to see.

And further, Christian resurrection means renovation of the whole

of reality, not only of the mind. Once a man has seen God, this vision cannot be lost any more during the observation of the created world. If the first theology is a pophatic, the second is mystic, the third is symbolic. All that exists, nature, scripture, the Church, the sacraments, the events of life, begin to be understood as symbols of God; we see God in them and through them. Symbolic theology becomes even speculative theology. The conceptual definitions elaborated with rational activity are at once "symbol of faith", image of a higher vision. This expression should be specially noted. In the Councils the Fathers tried to formulate "definitions" of doctrine, but in the Church, during the liturgy, we recite the *Symbolum fidei*, because through these concepts we see and adore God.

It seems difficult, but the same consideration can be adapted in the second type of mysticism, that of light. Even there one is obliged to renounce his concepts, his ideas. And these, as St. Maxim the Confessor notes, are as they were our children. Therefore, we love them as ourselves. To renounce these costs us a great sacrifice. But if we do it, as reward we merit to see the pure light, which is God.

The expression: to see the pure light occurs later in many circumstances in the oriental mysticism. Surely it is not easy to understand it. Two determinations are often given. This light is not sensible but spiritual, and it is not exterior, but interior, in the heart. We shall explain better these two details.

One author helps us to understand better the term "light". It is the famous Byzantine mystic, Symeon the New Theologian, because he describes his visions in a very concrete manner. His first revelation happened in this way: "One night he saw the light coming from all sides. So his

mind was elevated to heaven and there he saw another light, more clear than that which was near him." The meaning of this text is clear: from the beginning he learned to distinguish two lights, one sensible and another spiritual. No doubt, the true light is that which is spiritual.

But then comes the second stage. After various other apparitions he discovered that the spiritual light is identical with Christ and that he could hear his voice, not from outside, but in his own heart.

Finally, the third time when the voice of Christ did speak constantly in the heart. Can someone with human words express this interior voice of Christ? Most mystics say: It is impossible! But Symeon gives us a splendid interpretation. After having heard the voice of Christ, Symeon had a constant feeling in his own heart. He names himself *ptōchos philadelphos*, a poor man who loves his brothers.

It seems nothing special, but he explains it. He feels that he loves others constantly with great fervour. How is it possible? It cannot come from himself, because he is a poor man. Such love is coming from God, from Christ; for him it is evident. But he feels it in his own heart. That means this love is the divine light. It is spiritual, not sensible, and yet he feels it or hears it (these expressions are the same, as he notes) in his own heart. Therefore God is there!

With this affirmation we arrive at the basic terminology of the mysticism of the Eastern Church: to feel, to see, to hear God in the heart. How many times the word "heart" occurs in the spiritual books of the East. The texts speak of the attention to heart, of the purification of the heart, and especially of the prayer of heart. We find in the Index of the Philocalia at the word Kardia that there are many pages indicating many quotations.

Many authors assure that this aspect is the principal difference between the West and East. Theophane the Hermit saw once in a paper a caricature: a big head of a politician with a minuscule body. He commented on it: So are men of the West, only head and no heart.

The word heart "creates a problem even in the texts of the Bible, we try to substitute it with another word, but it is not easy.

The term "heart", creates serious difficulties for catholic theologians when they read orthodox teaching.

When Fr. Spacil, one of the first professors at the Oriental Institute in Rome, wrote his book on faith and revelation in the orthodox theology, he was surprised that he found many expressions he could not accept: faith is a sentiment of the heart, religion resides in the heart and so on. In the catholic apologetical books it was always written: fides residet in intellectu. The professors were obliged to take an oath against modernism; it was heretical to assert that the religion was founded on some unconscious sentiment. Many of these difficulties I have experienced myself. When I wrote my book on heart in the Russian spirituality, one of my censors was angry, took a pencil and wrote on the top of the manuscript, "you speak continually of the heart. Will you finally say, what it is?"

The heart is a mystery, as mysterious as God, writes the Russian theologian, Vysslavcev. But today, after many hesitations I venture to make this mystery a little clearer. It is important not to approach the problem in the wrong way, to begin with psychology. There we are accustomed to the threefold division: we think— that's why we have reason; we make decisions— we have will, and we have feelings—these reside in the heart. Having before our eyes this

division, we cannot accept the orthodox teaching that the religion or prayer is only feeling.

Therefore, we must approach the question not psychologically, but from the spiritual point of view. The mystical authors propose the question in this way: we have bodily eyes to see the material world. We have the intellect with which we see the rational reality, the world of the ideas. Have we some faculty which enables us to see God? The answer of the Bible and of spiritual literature is constant: it is the heart, God speaks to the heart, he resides there.

But what human faculty is the heart? The answer must be: it is no faculty! Man approaches God with his mind, with his will, with his body, with all his being. You must love God with your entire heart, it is with all your mind, with the whole soul, all your forces.

So we arrive at the primary statement: the heart does not mean some faculty, some activity of man. It is behind all activity as the first source, as being. Feuerbach tried to define man in materialistic manner: man is what he eats. Happily, we don't accept it, but we are tempted to identify man with what he thinks or what he wills or what he feels. But he is something deeper: it is he as he really is.

I think we all have met this distinction in our families: generally fathers are judging the facts. If we as boys have done something that merit punishment, the father would comment: you bad boy! The comment of the mother would be: It was not nice what he did, but he is a good boy!

This same distinction is made by many Christian writers in the East, but in the contrary sense: You can pray, you can give alms, but if it does not come from the heart, the

value of it is very relative. You have done good works, but you, yourself are you really good?

We can consider in two ways this integrity of man, which the term heart expresses. I don't know how to call them; I found for myself these terms: horizontal and vertical integrity. The horizontal means the collaboration of all human faculties in harmony. An example of it could be, for instance, Ignatian type of meditation. We take a text of the Holy Scripture and the work of the meditation should be to do in such a way that it penetrates our memory, our intellect, the decisions of our will, our affective life and our prayer, our dialogue with God. Thus the whole man is penetrated by this sentence.

In order to explain this effort Theophane the Hermit uses this example. Imagine an actor who reads his part in a tragedy, for instance in Macbeth of Shakespeare, sitting on a stool in his room, and then the same actor doing it on the stage. The same difference is seen if we do an act isolated or placed in the context of our whole life, where it comes from the heart.

The second integrity, as I mentioned, I call vertical. To explain it, I use to tell one concrete example. When I was a boy, I participated in the preparation for the first Communion; the priest told us this example. There was a boy, who was very devout, very pure, chaste, and used to attending the church, but when he was fourteen years old, he committed his first mortal sin. Immediately afterwards he went to swim and died. Now is he in hell. His purity before was for him useless. I remember that I did feel some difficulty in this good example. But how to formulate it? We cannot object against the last conclusion: hell is the result of mortal sin. But! There is a 'but'! Is it so easy to commit a mortal sin after

living always in purity? St. Theresa was afraid of thinking that in one moment, after many years in the religious life, one can commit a mortal sin. So she exclaimed: How dangerous is our life? I cannot deny it. A mortal sin is always possible. But do we really fear that St. Theresa when she was sixty-seventy years, was in real danger of committing a mortal sin?

Man has his continuity in good and in evil and it is not easy to change it. If it is conversion to good, we consider it as a miracle of the grace. This continuity of life is the heart. Shall I tell you another example from my youth? I was obliged to bring the holy water from the Church to our home. To avoid the troubles I imagined an easier way. We had a nice fountain with constant water. Could we not invite the priest to bless the fountain and so have holy water all the time?

The heart is like a fountain. To bless it, to purify it gives the security and the assurance that good acts will follow from themselves. Therefore, many authors say there is no other security or assurance of salvation than the pure heart.

Therefore, the purification of heart is the principal theme of the Philoscalla and of most spiritual instructions in the East. And we must admit, this teaching is one of the best of the Christian tradition. We know, that the moral books of the West were exclusively concentrated on distinguishing individual acts: this is good, this is bad.

The heart is not the theme of discussions of Western moralists. Rightly Fr. Hausherr established the difference between the western and eastern spirituality in these terms: in the West it is the perfection of acts which is above all desired and in the East perfection of the state, *katastasis*, *status orationis*.

The second aspect is certainly deeper, but the first is easier. We can easily check the acts. We have the moral books for this purpose: to control what is good and what is bad and in what degree. But how can we check our state, our heart? Is it not a mystery?

It is, but at the same time, the authors of the East are convinced that man has some mysterious intuition of his own state, he feels what he has in his heart. We feel ourselves and even others. Someone people have this feeling greatly developed, especially when it is a question of someone who is very near. So for instance a mother feels the state, the intention of her child. It is not easy to lie to a mother. St. Thomas calls this intuition *cognitio per connaturalitatem*, knowledge through the participation in the same nature.

The question is: can we believe such feelings? Are these intuitions we have of ourselves or of others? The answer of the spiritual authors is; we can, if there is one condition fulfilled i.e. if the heart is pure. Therefore purify your heart and you will have a right judgement of everyone and everything.

But the heart is not purified only by means of asceticism, but more through the grace of the Holy spirit, which resides in the heart, creates the connaturality with God. And so we arrive at the last conclusion: the heart, in virtue of his connaturality, has a constant intuition of God. It is like

a pure fountain which reflects heaven. The mysticism of the heart is the true mysticism because it is from life and in life.

The manifestation of the Spirit is love. Therefore, we find in the East so many exhortations to love in a gnoseological context, love as principle of knowledge. I can illustrate it with a beautiful text of B. Vyseslavcev: "For rationalism the assertion of Leonardo da Vinci is very characteristic: a great love is the daughter of great knowledge. For us, Christians of the East, what is unfortunate is the contrary: a great knowledge is the daughter of great love."

Another illustration is often given in the explanation of a text of the Byzantine liturgy. Before the recitation of the Creed there is this invocation: "Let us love one another in order to profess a unanimity" ... and follows the recitation: "I believe in one God Father."

I insist in this note: the first article of our faith is not: I believe in one God, as the comma is placed in the Latin Creed, but: I believe in one God the Father. To believe in God as the first principle of cosmos, for this reason is sufficient. But to believe in God the Father, which is the revelation of the Gospel, we must love one another in the purity of the hearts. Therefore the mysticism of the heart is necessary to the Christian in order to pray Our Father.

Dr. Thomas Spidlik

The Anthropological Aspect of Eastern Monasticism

Speaking of the origin of Christian monasticism we often hear the observation that it takes the place of martyrdom. The ideal of the first disciples of Jesus was to die for the faith and to give witness. When the time of cruel persecutions was over, St. Anthony proposed another way: "the martyrdom of the conscience", to die for the same ideal, but slowly, through the ascetic life. (Mark the word "slowly", because the age of a monk was always considerably long, and one can say that they did die very slowly.)

This observation is certainly true. We have a good study of E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr*, which proves it with many texts. But in theology no opinion, even the best opinion, can express the whole truth. Monasticism existed in many countries a longtime before the Christian era. It would be difficult to assert that in countries like India, China and Japan, monasticism took the place of martyrdom.

The opinion of the liberal historians from the end of the 19th century was quite different. Christian monasticism, they say, was and is a movement essentially antievangelical. It comes from the heathen mentality which is contrary to the Bible. The Jewish and Christian revelations can be expressed in one word, *katabasis*, descent of God from heaven to the earth in order to save sinners. The gospel is a religion of grace; *gratia quia gratis data*, without any right for it. The Monasticism, on the contrary, is the ascent to God through personal effort, labour; through asceticism

monks arrive at mysticism. These two tendencies are irreconcilable. Or are they? This is the question.

In order to answer this question, to resolve this problem, the various theories explaining the origin of monasticism are useless. To consult directly the documents is without doubt far better. I am not a specialist in the matter, but from what I have read of Indian or Chinese or Japanese monasticism, some ideas have given me this impression; the aspect of the human effort appears here truly dominant. Asceticism means a progressive purification of all elements which hinder man from realising his life according to his true dignity. Through asceticism man tries to be what a man should be. And the second element, more or less evident in various monastical forms, is contemplation. This means: to elevate the human mind to the reality which is absolute, divine, to ascend to heaven. Does God in heaven do something to help man, to save him? This element is most absent or not clearly stated in the non-Christian ascetic writings. Is there sufficient evidence in Christian literature? Let us consider more in detail the primary document of the Christian monks: the Life of St. Anthony by St. Athanasius. There occurs, as we have said, the expression "martyrdom of conscience". But this term is not dominating. St. Anthony was not called a "spiritual martyr", but "man of God"; he is a special man, but he is a man, a living man, all admire him, because he is a wonderful man. What has he in common with the martyr?

When we consider the treatises on martyrdom written in the first centuries, one idea is constantly repeated there: "Don't fear the sufferings of martyrdom, they are short, immediately after you will be with God." I underline these two terms: short sufferings in order to be suddenly with God. In the monastic life it is different: sufferings of the ascetic life are long, very long, sometimes nearly a hundred years, but corresponding to this long effort man begins to be with God not suddenly, but slowly, yet already in this life, progressively showing the perfection of a man of God. Having said this, I would like to note two elements which are typically Christian; one eschatological and the other, anthropological.

It is often said that the Oriental Church is more eschatological than the Church of the West and I believe it. But what kind of eschatologism do we mean? In some Lives of martyrs the eschatological hope is expressed in Platonic terminology: to be with God one has to be separated from this world and receives in return a new, totally different, life in heaven. These expressions are well meant, but we know that the Christian doctrine must be essentially different. It preaches the resurrection, the return to this world, even when it is obtained through death and the flight of the world. When will this transformation of the present world through the resurrection take place? In the future age. But the oriental spirituality is deeply convinced that the future age begins now. The monk who slowly dies and slowly flees from the world, daily experiences the progressive return in the new life and finds himself in the new world which is slowly transformed. The return to the paradisaical life is a constant motif of the monastic literature. We have so many texts that G. Colombas collected

them in a book: *Paradis et via angelique*.

The second element, typically Christian is, as I said, anthropological, to be with God. It is easy to say. Monks of all nations have desired this. And all agree with this ascetical principle: to be with God postulates the taking away of that which creates an opposition between man and the Supreme Being. Is God on a mountain? Then we must ascend to the height; is He spirit, we must renounce the bodily life; is He pure mind, we should not seek him in images. The monasticism of all kinds know these various renunciations, which are more or less radical. But in the end there remains one opposition which is the most problematic. God and I, two beings are so abysmally different. The nearer we get to God, the more different and the more opposite we feel towards him. The Christian mystics express it like the famous English work "The Cloud of Unknowing" in the duality of terms: God - sin. The non-Christian mystics repeat often: God-nothing. I think it is very characteristic. After having discovered this abysmal opposition, it seems that only one solution is open to us: to have the courage to renounce at last one's own personality, to vanish in the divine ocean, in a nirvana.

A Japanese apophthegm says: "A handful of salt thrown in ocean, where is it? A useless question." I agree; when the problem is considered only on the natural level, there seems to be no other solution. But the Christian truth is radically different: in the Holy Trinity the Son submitting Himself totally to the Father does not annihilate Himself; on the contrary He is the divine Person. In Jesus Christ humanity is perfectly submitted to the Logos and yet is the most perfect humanity we can imagine, perfectly divinised. And the Christian monk dying slowly in the

martyrdom of conscience, becomes also a "man of God"; he feels that his humanity, his natural gifts are not destroyed but renewed and progressively divinised. Living in Christ the man feels that he is truly man and he is glad to develop all the forces of his own humanity.

But what is a man? The *gnothi seauton* ("know thyself"), self knowledge was in antiquity considered as the beginning of wisdom. But there are different ways of knowing oneself. The human person can be studied from the physical point of view, as the object of the medical science. We can pass further to the metaphysical considerations. But Philon of Alexandria noted that all these notions have not great importance. For the spiritual life one's knowledge of oneself is indispensable, that what we call "moral", which means, to know one's own possibilities, what we can do and what we are able to become. The ascetics have discovered that the possibilities of man are enormous, nearly miraculous. The Modern Psychology does not consider as miracles various facts which are attested in the non-Christian monasticism. They are "natural" in the sense that human nature can realise these phenomena. It is interesting that Christian monks did not desire to perform miraculous facts, and when they happened they kept it secret. But their ideal (the miracle *kal' exochen*) was to realise the highest possibilities of man. The ideal of monks was the spiritual life. Angels are spiritual beings. But man cannot become an angel, otherwise he would cease to be a man. At the highest degree of his spiritualisation he never will be a ghost. But Jesus Christ revealed to us that man can become God and remains man. Therefore, the Christian monks, "men of God", are divinised and remain truly human, in the best sense of the word.

It is not an easy task. Man as he appears today is not a true man; our

human nature is corrupted by sin. The true man was Adam in the moment of his creation and the true humanity will appear at the end of the ages in the time of the last or Second Coming of the Saviour on the earth. To show to the world that this idea is not an illusion but reality, this was considered as the witness of the men of God, of the monks. Perhaps we should briefly describe the different aspects of this renewed "human life."

A certain scheme is found already in the *Life of St. Anthony* where four progressive flights from the world are described. The first flight is described in the chapters 2-7. Anthony heard the words of the Gospel (Mt 19, 21). He renounces his possessions and follows the Lord. But he is young (18 or 20 years) and the passions, especially sensual attraction, is very strong. So he goes outside the village and dedicates himself to the practice of temperance, bodily abnegation. The reward which follows this human effort is *apatheia*, the peace, the harmony of the soul and body. We can observe here an extraordinary optimism. Martin Luther observed in him this internal division. We are half-angel and half-beast, but there is no possibility in this life to heal this division; so all our hope is in the grace of God. The *Life of St. Anthony*, on the contrary, presents a young man, who in few years dominates his passions and arrives at the harmony of human forces, with the grace of God, but also through human effort.

But at this moment (chapters 8-10) he decides to take the second flight, further in the desert, far away from society. Solitude is the place where interior activity can be developed. But it is not for a passionate man. On the contrary a harmonious man should not fear the solitude. But Anthony discovers quickly his mistake. The solitude is not solitude. The desert is full of devils, that is, of

evil thoughts. The heart can be pure, but so many thoughts come from outside and are disturbing the mind, making it difficult to concentrate. What are the men of today doing? To expel the melancholy of solitude, they are watching the television and during study they listen to the transistor. It is the old principle of expelling one devil through another, one distraction through another.

The Life of St. Anthony professes even here an extraordinary optimism. By earning discretion or discernment of spirits, one is able to control his mind, his interior activity. And the pure mind is an extraordinary faculty. It is like a pure fountain which reflects the heaven, the source of marvellous intuition, vision of the spiritual reality—in Greek called *theoria*, the true gnosis, contemplation. This is the result of the second flight.

But the flights of Anthony continue. He goes deeper into the desert (chapter 11-48), which is supposed to be the habitation of devils, and he goes there in order to expel them and to purify these places. I know that these chapters are not easy reading for our mentality. All this demonology seems to us legendary, fantastical. But in all Christian mysteries we must distinguish between the clothing, the language of the time, and the mystery itself. The demonology of ancient monks is much developed and is taken very seriously. How should we express it in the terms of our own time?

I know, I express it partially, but we can do it in the following terms. Man discovers that his mind and his heart are continually distracted. Why? The demons are "in the air" (Ef. 2, 2), and it means that the whole milieu, is depraved. We cannot change it. But the meaning of the Life of St. Anthony is deeply optimistic. The man who purifies his own

heart, purifies the "air", the surroundings where he lives, even were it full of demons and totally corrupted. And what is the reward of this effort? Anthony becomes the spiritual father of others. The wall between men, erected by sins, is destroyed, one understands each other and reads in the heart of others as in an open book. Spiritual direction, in the East, supposes the cardiognosia.

Through spiritual fatherhood human relations are normalised. But yet another effect follows: it has immediately a repercussion in the irrational world, in the cosmos. The animals return to obey the man of God and the nature does not resist his will, because he is the image of God. Anthony works miracles.

From what we have just said, the renewal of humanity seems to arrive at the end and the peace of the paradise returns to the earth. But the story of salvation is long. An immature eschatology, as Berdiaev notes, is very dangerous. Even in this renewed paradise the old temptation remains, the temptation of pride. Anthony feels it, especially when the fame of his miracles is known and the people come to him. So he decides to take the fourth and last flight (ch. 49-88). He escapes from himself in the perfect solitude of the spirit: to be '*monos*' with the '*Monos*', alone with God. And, what is the reward? He says: "I no more fear God", because he knows by revelation the day of his death, which is the sign of the predestination, eternal and unalterable peace with God.

Now the road of the purification of human nature is really finished. This peace begins to shine on the face of the man of God, he seems to be illumined like Moses descending from Mount Sinai. Now it would be good psychology to finish our article and not go further and destroy the good impression. But scholars are

born precisely for this, to bring objections there, where everyone is content. So I dare propose my objections even against my own arguments.

The principal idea is clear: monasticism tries to rehabilitate man by means of the divinisation of the human nature. The term "divinisation" is not biblical. It was introduced by the Greek Fathers, its origin is in the ancient philosophy. But it expresses well the situation created by the incarnation of the Logos: God became man in order that man may become divine. Even that does not present great difficulty.

But it is not easy to imagine the divinisation of man in the context of ancient religious traditions. Why doesn't the Bible use the term 'divinisation', except in some very few texts? Because the Old Testament insists so frequently on the absolute transcendence of Yahweh. And the ancient religious feeling of the Greeks was the same: gods and men are different races, we cannot mix one with the other. writes Homer. Nirvana, the annihilation in the ocean of divinity is the most radical consequence of this mentality. How can a Christian monk so easily say that the divinisation of man is our goal?

Ancient monastic literature did not propose nor resolve this problem theoretically but only on the practical level. As a speculative question, it came in the form of monothelism. This heresy, as we know, affirmed that in the person of Christ there cannot exist two wills together, the divine will of the Logos and the human will of the man Jesus; they would be in opposition. Therefore the human will is annihilated, substituted by the divine will of the Logos. I must say, I think, this is nirvana. What is a man without his own will? But in Jesus Christ if there are two

wills together, how can we avoid the opposition between them?

It is not without interest that the greatest defenders of orthodoxy against monothelism were the monks, and among them the classical author of the monastic spirituality, Maxim the Confessor.

Why were precisely the monks so vehement against this heresy? Because they did know from their daily experience: 1) that there is really an abyss between man and God, that the human will and the divine will can absolutely not be placed on the same level; 2) but through the grace of God man is called to a dialogue with the Creator. Yahweh spoke to Adam and Adam answered. The full renewal of human nature is based on this dialogical relation with God, which in simple terms means prayer. Incessant prayer is the basic theme of the monastic life, a concrete expression of divinisation.

The development of the dialogical character of man is the great merit of Christianity. In non-Christian literature this dialogue is or absent or only insinuated. The modern Russian theologian, P. Florenskij, thinks that it is parallel with the revelation of the Holy Trinity, the personal relations in God himself. Where this conscience of divine personalism vanishes, there appears an "objective" culture, whose principal interest is concentrated on "things", not on persons. Even person in such "scientific" society is studied and valued as "thing."

A thing is more perfect, the more it is isolated. Therefore, the principal effort of study is analysis, separation. On the contrary, a person is a person when he exists in relation, in dialogue with other persons; a mother is a mother because she has children; a teacher is a teacher when he has disciples.

The solitary monks of Egypt, living in desert, were in no manner isolated. They discovered that man is man only if he lives in his essential relation to God. The monk is a man of God, if he is in continual dialogue with God. This dialogue with God does not destroy the dialogue with men. We have seen the example of St. Anthony who becomes spiritual father, and of so many other "fathers" of the desert, having the *cardiognosia*. The fact that monks were called "fathers", *abbas* (and women as "mothers", *ammas*) proves that their relation to God had as a consequence a new, deeper, spiritual relation to man.

Still there were plenty of them who feared to develop this relation further, because they feared to lose or to diminish the principal relation—the dialogue with God. A classic example of the solitary way of life is Saint Arsenius, who, as we read, heard from heaven this counsel to save his soul: *Fuge, tace, quiesce*, escape, be silent and you will find peace. And when the other monks marvelled at his extremely solitary way of life, objecting that it is against charity, he explained his reasons. He attests, "I love you, God is my witness, but I cannot be at the same time with you and with God. Because God, his saints and angels, are extremely numerous, but in heaven, there is only one will and one thought. On the contrary, where various men are together, immediately appear differences of thinking and willing. And this circumstance destroys unity and harmony which is the goal of monastic life.

Did the other monks of Egypt answer this objection? Here and there, in an indirect manner. But we know one who became the principal legislator of monastic life, St. Basil, whose cenobitical foundations are meant as an answer to this objection and as a solution of this difficulty.

We know that Basil, after his conversion, visited Egypt, but he was in no way enthusiastic about solitary life. In his famous 7th Great Rule he criticises eremitism as not natural, full of dangers, against the law of the Gospel. Man, according to his nature, is a social being (*zoon politikon*) not *zoon monasticon*, solitary, "monastic". The Church is the mystery of unity between human persons. Are we not different? Surely, very different, and yet the first community of Jerusalem was a plurality of men, having one heart and one mind (Act 4, 32).

Is the Church of today no more a unity? Basil, as bishop, had experienced the fatal consequences of the divisions. And it seems that there was no hope to better the situation. But monasticism means optimism even in this respect. If we cannot correct the Church as a whole, we can organize a small Church, a cenobitic monastery, where only the brothers are admitted who are *homopsychoi*, having the same soul, the same purpose and the same will. So the problem of Arsenius is resolved: one can be together with God and with men at the same time and the natural harmony is not destroyed and the dialogue with the brothers does not hinder the dialogue with God; on the contrary, the common prayer, the liturgy becomes an expression of this unity.

A sermon of Saint Theodor Studite develops this idea, but the most classical expression of this spirituality is the icon of the Holy Trinity of Rublev. Three angels on one throne before one eucharistic cup introduce in the mystery of the divine unity, which is, following the Pseudo-Dionysius a "super-unity", the unity between three Persons. Such a fact seems impossible, because "person" means freedom. Yet in God this freedom is reconciled with one nature.

It is truly a *hyper-henotes, unitas super principium unitatis*.

In the icon of Rublev there is yet another important element. The perspective is reserved, upset, so that lines are not vanishing behind, but descending on us. The meaning of it is clear: the divine mystery is descending on us in order to create an analogical spiritual unity between us men, so that the will of God be done on earth as in heaven.

But even here we shall not stop our considerations. Monks in community life did not only pray, they even worked and sometimes very hard. Theodor Studite desired to reform the Byzantine monasteries in the spirit of Basil. With his rule the monasteries became a true community of work. His own activity was designed as *polyergia*, to work much. No human work was excluded; manual work, copying books, painting, education, hospices for old people and for children. Nowadays we don't consider it as something special; our society preaches publicly its esteem for working people. But it was not so in antiquity. Generally admitted was the distinction (which passed into our canon law) between the *opera servilia* and the *arte liberales*.

The base of this distinction can be in the social situation of the time, the condition of the free citizen and the slaves. But the same distinction was defended by the serious philosophers, who preached the equality of men. What was the reason? Nobody can deny that man becomes more and more that which is in his constant activity. Is he painting, he becomes a painter; Is he teaching, he becomes a teacher. Now when he is day by day working with material things, his interest and his thinking becomes more and more material. On the contrary a constant spiritual occupation introduces man into the spiritual sphere. Therefore, the Greek philosophers say

that it is a great gift of God to have some possession, not too great and not too small, and to have servants, so that one can occupy himself with the "liberal arts", especially with philosophy. And the apex of this philosophical life as Plato and Aristotle say is to elevate the mind to God, not to be obliged to think of the work in fields or elsewhere.

This conception did penetrate even among monks. The so-called Messalians, coming from Syria founded their argument on Scripture, in the passage of Maria and Martha. Monks should be like Maria; their exclusive occupation should be prayer. Work must be left to secular people. We know how the orthodox monasticism did react against this heresy. Even the famous *Ora et labora* of St. Benedict is polemical. But theoretically the problem would not be resolved, if it remains that there are two activities which are radically different: one spiritual – prayer, another material – work.

Sure, in the monastery there is more possibility to pray than in the world. The divine Offices are frequent. But there are even some dead islands, when monks work. There are some works, which do not ask the full concentration of mind. One can work in the field, with hands and at the same time listen to a brother, who, following the rule of St. Pacomius, is accompanying the working people and is reading aloud the Scripture. It was also not difficult to learn by heart the Psalms and sing them while collecting fruits and vegetables in the orchard. But this solution cannot have a general application. How could a monk sing Psalms when he is teaching in the school? And even if it should be possible it would not resolve the principal problem. The monk tries to live a harmonious, unified life. Working one thing and thinking another, makes him divided in his interior.

The question must not be proposed in this way: How to pray during the work; but how to transform the work, even when it is material, into prayer. The solution cannot be expected from philosophy. In philosophy the term "spiritual" means immaterial. Therefore, a material work cannot be spiritual. The Christian terminology is essentially different. Spiritual is there where the Holy Spirit is active. He is certainly in prayer, crying out in the heart, Abba, Father.

But the same spirit is in work, when work is the expression of charity. The work in the field can be material, but if it is performed with charity, it becomes spiritual, perhaps more spiritual than high contemplation. St. John Chrysostom speaks very often of work. God the Creator is the first worker. He created man in his image, as a worker. His duty is then to continue the work of creation. This opinion we hear very often even today. But I think we can observe an interesting difference between Chrysostome and the mentality of the West. Even in Europe we hear in sermons this idea: human work continues creation. We understand it normally as the transformation of the world. We show the marvels of technology, how the world is changed in the last century. St. John Chrysostome and the eastern spirituality in general do not praise transformation, but sanctification of the world.

The monk working in the orchard has the power to sanctify the world with an activity which seems very humble and without importance. This aspect of monastic humanism should not be forgotten. St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa and other Fathers are astonished by the social differences of men. Some of their writings give a nearly socialistic or communistic impression. But their approach to the

problem is different. The primary question is not whether one has more money than the others. What we must avoid is the situation in which one feels himself more important than the other. Insisting on the spiritual value, all works are equal, in the monastery; a humble and ignorant manual worker has the same, if not a higher vocation than a writer of theological books, while the goal is the same, spiritual. The practical conclusion is the Basilian monastery with perfect equality in the common life, and so realising the eternal dream of humanity.

Finally, we consider the last aspect of monastic humanism, which influenced deeply the spiritual tradition of the Church. As we continually repeat, the monastic life is considered natural life. The nature, as philosophy assures, is a principle of continuity, of stability. Therefore it can be expressed in constant principles, in laws. We discover the natural laws of the cosmos; human psychology has its laws also. The spiritual life depends on God's free call, but because it is natural, it can be expressed also by spiritual principles. Many of these fundamental principles of the spiritual life are formulated already in the Life of St. Anthony. St. Pacomius and Basilus wrote the "rules" of the spiritual life, assuring that the constant observance of these rules leads man to sanctity. In the west monks are *regulares*, obeying a *regula*. Such is their definition following the canon law.

The life following a common rule is without doubt the highest degree of external unification. The Pachomian monks have the same cloths, the same order of the day, the same common prayers, etc. Therefore they bear a common name. They are Pachomians, as later Basilians, Franciscans, etc.

But already in the Basilian monasteries there appears a great problem

regarding the faculties of the superior as a person and as a father. Is his task not reduced to pure administration, distribution of work? In this case he is no more "father" and the relations in the monastery become purely formal. The true superior is the written rule and the monastery is an institution.

Here I think of mosaics of Ravenna. There is the baptistery of the Orthodox and of the Arians. In the first, we see the normal representation of the Pantocrator; Christ sitting on the throne. In the Arian baptistery the same throne is there but on the seat there is not a living person, but a book. We feel that this conception can be very dangerous. Indeed in the so-called idio-rhythmical monasteries of Mount Athos the power of the Superior was reduced to the minimum. This situation is considered as decadence. But we know the problem remains vital in every institution of the Church: what is first, the person or the rule?

We will not resolve it, but in this context I like to refer briefly to the history of Russian monasticism as very instructive. There was in the first period an enormous vitality of monastic life, a conspicuous number of monasteries. But then in 15th century there begins the decadence. At the end of the same century two important reformers appear. One of them could be called traditionalist – Joseph of Volokolamsk. According to his teaching, all evil comes from the fact that monks refuse to observe the traditional rules. The solution is to return to perfect observance of the rules.

His antagonist – Nil Sorskij – can be called, if we will, a progressivist. The new times demand a new manner

of life, new rules. Which of these two tendencies had success? At first, both had success, but in the next generation a new kind of decadence sets in. A true and fundamental renewal of the Russian monasticism came later with the so-called *startsi*, the spiritual fathers. Natural life has its rules and principles, these must be respected; but a life can never be reduced to an institution. Inside the rules there must be a place for free dialogue, as in a family, between the fathers and brethren, while the monastery must be a community of friends. To live with friends is surely the best expression of Christian humanism.

As conclusion, we sum up the principal ideas. The monastic life is an ascetic life. Asceticism means renunciation, abnegation. This is found hard in Christian monasticism, as well as in non-Christian monasticism. Through their abnegations all monks, Christians, or non-Christians, hope to be elevated to a better life, spiritual, divine. But Christianity cannot be understood without the mystery of the resurrection. Abnegation means sacrifice and the sacrifice means a return, restitution, renewal. In Christian monasticism both elements are experienced at the same time. The studies of monasticism have concentrated their attention too much on the first element; monastic asceticism, monastic renunciation.

We have now tried to insist on the second corresponding element; the renewal of human nature in its purity, that is the harmony of spirit and body, of man and the world, of men among themselves, harmony in human society, equality of work. All this has one basis, the continual dialogue with God, which transforms us and the whole reality.

Ecclesial Spirituality

Basic Elements and Orientations

Introduction

The meaning of the subject. What do we mean by spirituality? Spirituality is often taken as a special trend of Christian sanctification, ministry and work, for example the spirituality of some religious order, say the Ignatian one. Here we mean by spirituality all the theoretical and practical means used by our church for the sanctification of man that is for the realisation of Gospel in the life of her children. Evidently there are some elements common to other traditions, but there are also those who are more specifically East-Syrian or Chaldean, either because they represent special traditions or because they are founded on theological or ascetical background: these specific elements may come from liturgy, that is the Anaphora and the liturgical year etc. or from ascetical practices, special shape of monasticism, etc.

Our starting point should be accordingly, theoretical and practical, that is starting from the texts which nourished the spirit of our faithful and meditating on the historical data and on the practice of the Church. Both, texts and history – constitute the 'Spiritual Heritage' delivered to us from our fathers in the spirit regarding the evangelical life in our Church. So, praxis and theology of spiritual life will be our basic elements; this means that we start from the life of the Church and from her theologizing on this life.

1. Ministry and Mystery

With this title I aim to stress the relationship between being a christian through what we may call "christian consecration" and performing a ministry or a function in the church. We can envisage this aspect after having spoken of ecclesial dimension of the christian worship. Indeed the being of the church and the spiritual commitment of her members is a realisation of their consecration: being christian, ordered minister, a monk, a martyr or a missionary, man of culture, six aspects of christian commitment relating to christian consecration. Let us first see the general topic of relation between consecration and function, Church is a living body; it has the properties of the living being: birth, growth etc. Its organisation is an accomodation of its christian life. Our church has full consciousness of that. Every new patriarch used to hold a synod. The synod is a fundamental institution which used to have as aim these three points: to present a new elaborate symbol of faith, to face the moral problems and spiritual life of the church, and to adopt canonical measures as church canons.¹ From the whole of the canons of our synods we may have this result: The church is an organised and hierarchical body as well as a spiritual community. Patriarch is the head of the fathers, bishops are the spiritual fathers of their flock, priest is the

minister of the sacraments, deacons are their servers .. and baptized persons are the faithful "the people of God and the sheep of his flock"²; all are members of the same community worshipping the same Lord, each one according to his ministry. Our synods do not neglect the canonical dimension of the Church; but the basis of any mission or ministry is the respective consecration or ordination: for each service there is a correspondent sacramental "dedication" of the person. Speaking of ecclesiastical function the idea of delegating a person to a ministry without a consecration and mission is not found in the Church. This means that the jurisdiction is a consequence of sacramental ordination; and in some cases it may be revoked of a person; but the contrary is not possible, even for less important ministries... reading the Old Testament, for which there is the Qaroya. So any honorary or titular bishop does not exist. All this means that to study the true spirituality of any category in the Church we have to see mainly the rite of its consecration, the baptismal order for laymen, ordination for the other clergy.

2. Lay people, new beings in Christ's community

To be baptized is to begin a new life. Receiving the fruit of this rebirth, a Christian receives also the means which he is invited to enact in order to reach the fulness of this new life. In the Karozutha, proclamation, made by the deacon before the consecration of the elements of baptism, we read:

"Let us therefore all who are the beloved sons of the holy baptism, pray for this our son, who is about to receive the sign of life by renouncing the devil and all his works, that he may be perfected in the faith of the

Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that he may be made fit to receive this great and wonderful gift of grace, and that he may throw off, through sin forgiving baptism the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that he may put on, through the washing of the holy water, the new man who is renewed of God in righteousness and true holiness that he may be made fit to receive from the holy altar the Body and Blood of Christ, a pledge of the resurrection to a new life, and that on his account there may be joy among the holy angels in heaven, and throughout the holy Church, because he has become one of the Christ's flock, and that he may in righteousness and holiness of life keep the gift of the unspeakable mercy which he receives through the holy Spirit, which shall guide him from this world to the abode of light and life, and that he may become an inheritor of Christ."³

From this text we understand that baptism is sacrament, mystery, which comprehends all the Christian life: the faithful leave the old world renouncing the devil and throwing of the old man, is renewed in Christ's life which he receives is made fit to receive His Body and Blood; is joined to the Church, is committed to the life in righteousness in order to reach, guided by the spirit, the immortal life, inherited with the glorious Christ!

The oil takes the place of the circumcision and enables the Christian to worship God: the idea of passing to a new life is also inherent to this

consecration. Before consecrating the oil, the priest prays:

"...The holy oil which is given in former days for the ordination of a temporal priesthood, and a transitory sovereignty. You have committed to the priests of the church to be a sign and emblem of those who are translated from earthly things to heavenly in an immortal body and unchanging spirit being circumcised thereby with a circumcision without hands, by the throwing off the body of the sin, through the circumcision of Christ, and thereby made worthy to praise, with fear and trembling, the mighty and sovereign Lord of all with all the holy and heavenly powers".⁴

3. The order, an ecclesial service

The consecration here is, as we have said, a spiritual habilitation to exercise a service; the variety of consecration is because of the variety of the services; but all of them are performed in the Church and for the Church. The ordination of the lectors is to make them fit stewards to read the Holy Scriptures, the divine word. For the subdeacon, the bishop prays:

"O Lord God... in thy Mercy fit them to perfect that which is wanting in thy holy church, and in thy piety, O Lord, grant that they may minister before thee without blame..."⁵

In the general imposition of hand which precedes the proper one for deacons, priests and bishops, the bishop prays:

"Thou hast made, O Lord, a channel of thy gift to thy holy Church that in thy name I may impart the talents of the ministry of the spirit to the ministers of thy holy sacraments. And now, behold, according to the apostolic tradition which has descended in

a chain to us by the laying on of hand⁶ of the ministration of the church, we present unto Thee these Thy servants..."⁷

The ministry of sacraments performed by the deacons is established in the Church by her founder, with the other ministries. Laying the hand on the deacon the bishop prays:

"O Lord God.. Thou hast given a knowledge of the truth to all mankind through the appearance of thy only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the flesh, and has elected thy holy Church and set up in her prophets, apostles, priests and doctors for the perfecting of the saints, and hast also set up in her righteous deacons for the ministry of thy glorious and holy sacraments.. that they may be elected deacons in thy holy church and serve thy pure altar... shine forth in works and righteousness for the ministry of thy life-giving and divine sacraments..."⁸

Laying hands on an ordained priest the bishop prays:

"O Lord... who hast chosen thy holy church, and set up in it prophets... and priests, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of the church that they may... minister at thy holy altar... offering up unto thee oblations of prayers and sacrifices of thanksgiving in thy holy church, and consecrating.. the sin-forgiving bosom of mystical birth... and adorn with works of righteousness the children of the holy catholic church..."⁹

So according to the declarative formula said then by the bishop; "A. B. has been set apart, consecrated, and perfected, for the work of the presbyterate of the church..."¹⁰

The formula of the ordination of bishop proclaims his ministry in

the church, an essentially pastoral ministry, a father's ministry.

"Vouchsafe, O God, the Father of truth, the holy and glorious one, that he (the one ordained bishop) may feed thy flock in uprightness of heart; that with his tongue he may preach the right word of the truth, be a light to those who sit in darkness... cloth him, O Lord, with power from on high that he may bind and loose both in heaven and on earth; that by the laying on of his hands¹¹ the sick may be healed, and miracles may be wrought by him in thy holy name... he may make priests and deacons, subdeacons and deaconesses, for the ministry of thy holy church; and gather together thy people and the sheep of thy pasture, and perfect the souls over which he is made overseer in the fear of God and in all purity and at the last, stand before thy awful throne with confidence, and be worthy to receive from thee, the reward promised to the faithful stewards of the household..."¹²

The prayer of the ordination of the patriarch asks for the elected one "that this spiritual gift which is the patriarchate may be well kept with this administrator, set apart to sit on this holy See till the day of the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ... and keep for us also, continue the ordaining bishops the concord with him, according to your covenant with Abraham Isaac and Israel (the patriarchs)..."¹³ From the whole rite of the laying of hand on the patriarch, it may be summed up that his ministry is to be the universal father of his church and her universal pastor; this is clear also from the gospel read on him, which is Mt 16, 13-19 on the keys of the kingdom and Jn 21, 15-17a on the love and pastoral mission of Peter.¹⁴

Now we can sum up the spirituality of clergy. The readers are servants of the word, the subdeacons servants of the house of God, the deacons servants of the sacraments in the church of God. The priest is consecrated in order to be the dispenser of the mysteries of sacraments of salvation and their respective commitments in and to the people of God; the bishop is the pastor who feeds his flock, gathers it, guides it, establishes in it the ministries for its sanctification, etc. His function is fundamentally pastoral and the evoked terms recall to mind those used by Jesus in his parable on the good shepherd (Jn 10, 1-18). The patriarch is the head of the shepherds.

These considerations lead us to other conclusions: the priestly ministry is constituted of three poles: the altar, the Gospel and the people, as three correlated fields of service; for which service is granted a consecration or an order. And this is also the idea behind the consecration of the deaconess and of the monk. The second conclusion comes from the fact that ministries are consecration in the church for the benefit of her members; any ecclesiastical service has no meaning outside the communion of the Church. The orders come from the church, are the expression of her activity in sanctifying man, and at the same time found her unity. Orders and communion are correlative realities.

4. Monasticism

Monasticism as a complete dedication of oneself in material and spiritual life, to our Lord Jesus Christ is an expression of evangelical life of the church. The vocations in the church are multiple, but to leave everything and to spend his own energies in liturgical prayer, community work, brotherly life, has always been seen as a necessity for some individuals of a church. Here it

is history that imposes on us to consider monasticism as an invaluable component of our church. Past and present of our church cannot be understood without our monks.

In the beginning monasticism appeared in an individual form, guarding continence and living with the local church under the guidance of the bishop. It was essentially and it is still a covenant with Christ, so the monks were called *bnay qyama*, the sons of the covenant, and the virgins *bath qyama*, the daughters of the covenant¹⁵ but already in the 4th century there were some anchorites. On the end of the 4th cent. begins some form of cenobitic life, and the golden age of the East-Syrian monasticism was the 5th-7th centuries. According to Fr. J. N Fiey, one third of the Chaldean young people became monks. It continued serving the church in an important way. The monasteries were spread and separated around the cities, as it is still visible now a days around Niniveh-Mosul: On north there is Mar Michael, on north east mar Giwarguis, on the East Mar Yonan, now a mosque, on the south Mar Elija, known as Dar Sa'id etc. Same thing in my village Karmless, where there is still a monastery church of Mar Giwarguis of the VIth century and on the East, the Rabban Bar-Edta (son of the church). Fr. Fiey mentions about 300 monasteries. The sixth century presents a paradoxal situation: while the ecclesiastical law permitted even the hierarchy to get married since the end of the 5th century, on 544 we have a strong revival of monasticism. Mar Abraham of Kashkar (583 A.D.) founded the renowned monastery of the mount Izla near Nisibis, the city of Ephraem and Narsai. Prof. A. Voobus sums up the realisation of these monasteries of which that of Mount Izla was the first foundation:

"Under its aegis, a network of monastic communities was establi-

shed spiritual, ascetic, and mystical literature was produced in these monastic centres that nurtured piety, education, charity, and intellectual culture."¹⁶

Abraham was succeeded by Dadischo Qatraya, an important ascetical writer especially with his commentary of Abba Isais and his book on solitude¹⁷ and then by Babai the Great, author of numerous treatises.¹⁸ During the time of the latter a discord dispersed many of the monks and by this way many other monasteries were founded. Of special interest to be mentioned is the monastery of Mar Abraham and Mar Gabriel, known as the Upper Monastery (Dayra elletta), on Tigris, Mosul, the centre of liturgical development and reformation mid. 7th century. Monks continued to be active in the life of our church, also on the missionary level. The decline begins with the 8-13 cent. The Islam being against celibacy combatted religious life, although we find still prominent figures in mid 10th cent. like Yausep Absnaya whose life and teaching are recorded by his disciple Yohannan bar Khaldoon in the Mar Hormizds monastery¹⁹, Alqosh, or like Kabban Brik Iso.²⁰ In 1808, Fr. Gabriel Danbo, in the monastery of Rabban Horimzds renovated our monastic life. The Antonine Order of St. Hormizus counts now a days about fifty priests and monks and 20 novices. It participated efficiently in the mission of our church on pastoral and cultural levels especially through keeping and propagating manuscripts, mainly in Syriac.²¹

5. Missionary Enterprise

An apostolic church is necessarily a missionary church. The missionary activity is a marvellous sign of a living and well organized church. Jesus himself made this and the early community understood his goal. To be missionary is one of the most striking features of our church. Urged by the fire of her love to Christ she

worked to spread gospel till the extremity of East Asia and of Arabia. It is worth to be noted that this gigantic enterprise was undertaken by the sole initiative of the church without any support of secular power as it happened for example with the portuguese. This is a clear sign of the purity of her action and her intention to bring Christ to those who do not know him.

The main explanation of this spread seems to be found in a spiritual and cultural aperture which consisted in three points:

- 1) The cultural level of the members of this Church, which enabled them to be employed as scribes, chronicles, notaries, etc. in the countries to which they brought the Good News. In Mongolia and Turkestan they introduced even the alphabet where till then Syriac, more precisely East-Syriac has been in use.

- 2) The adoption of local languages and cultures of the evangelized countries: Bible, dogmatic, liturgical and spiritual works were translated from Syriac into Pahlevi (already in the 5th century), Turkish, Chinese and Mongolian. This means that where Syriac was maintained it was not imposed. Besides, the church in Malabar used East Syrian during her communion with the East Syrians and later, on the ground of an Indian tradition: respect for the religious language as do the Hindus for the Sanskrit and the Muslem for the Arabic. The Malabarians hold Syriac as their religious language, because it is the language of Jesus, of Saint Thomas and of their Bible.

- 3) The action of merchants who as Christians brought spiritual as well as material jewels, that is faith and wares, according to the parable given by Jesus on the merchant in search of fine pearls (Mt 13, 45-46). Evidently these were accompanied by priests

and monks, and even many of these were priests.

Evidently beyond the means and methods there was the missionary Spirit. In Arabia our missionaries reached Hira or Hirta in 380. In 512 its King Mundhir became Christian, and his daughter Hind which means India was a famous nun. Christians were persecuted in Najran in 523 A.D. Qatar, now totally moslem, gave us great scholars: Isaac of Niniveh, Gabriel Qatraya, Dadisho Qatraya, Abraham bar Lipah... Iso-yahb II of Gdala (628-646). They promoted evangelization deep in Persia to Central Asia and China²². Another great impetus was given by Timothy I the Great (780-823). With them Gospel reached the extremities of Asia. The obelisk of Si-ngan-fu erected in 781 records in Syriac and Chinese the introduction in China of the Luminous religion by an archdeacon called Alopen. In the 8th cent. the missionaries reached Japan with the work of a doctor called Mili or Limi. Christianity in Mongolia has conserved us some of its traces: tomb crosses in Tohagan-Nor, where the palace of Qublai Khan was. The climax of Christianity was reached when a Mongolian, Yahballaha III (1280-1317 A.D.) became patriarch.

How to explain the decline of such a great work? As mission is sign of Church's vitality, so its extinction is sign of the weakness of a Church. Already some of the Abbasis Kalifs, like al-Mutwakkil persecuted Christians; Saladin did the same in the 12th cent. Sometimes the taxes imposed on Christians were so high that they became moslem in order to be freed of them; In Mongolia, with the conversion to Islam of the reigning family in 1295 A.D. there began a difficult period for the Church. Yahballaha had to suffer much from his fellow Mongolians. The decline continued till the coming of

Tamerlane (Timour) (1390–1405) almost annihilated this glorious Church. In Merv Christians were killed like sheep in March 1321. Other reasons could be cited such as infiltration of other doctrines. The situation created by persecutions made impossible the contacts of Christians. e. g. to send bishops, in so large an area. Some add other reasons e. g. the tolerance exercised by the Church after the agreement of mutual recognition in 1142 between the patriarchs Abdiso II and the West Syrian Dionysius; this would have stopped the competition between the two Churches. But one lesson, very valuable, remains to us: the church used the opportunities given to her to spread the Gospel in teaching and in evangelizing with writings as the innumerable apologies written by our theologians testify or by sending missionaries.²³

6. A Theology of Martyrdom

The above mentioned facts, and the life of innumerable martyrs of our church help us to perceive that she has martyrdom as an essential note as her redeemer, Christ, the ideal of all martyrs and her apostle patron saint Thomas. We can appreciate the experience of Thomas recognising in Jesus His Lord and his God (Jn 20:28) and take it as our emblem, but our martyrs remind us the other word of Thomas: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (Jn 11, 16). One of the oniatas of martyrs in our Rite echoes this saying:

"The martyr said to his fellow, feeling compassion on his companion. 'Come, let us die for Jesus, and inherit eternal life'²⁴ Indeed a martyr is a continuation and a result of missionary spirit. Both confess Christ. Isai the Doctor, in his explanation of the feast of the Martyrs/Confessors (Mawdiane) says that the reason of calling them martyrs/confessors is because "they preached resurrection,²⁵

and the names" indicate that they proclaimed the truth of faith.²⁶ Later on he writes: "We call them martyrs because through their sufferings they gave testimony about the resurrection of Christ, questioned by heathen and about the immortal life given through Christ."²⁷ This is largely confirmed by liturgical texts called martyrs' Anthems or Onita d-Sahde; Martyrs were preachers of the Trinity. On Saturday ramsa we sing:

"The holy clothed of light, martyrs, went out to the four corners of the world in order to announce the most glorious Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of Holiness."²⁸ They were the missionaries who carried far the treasure of faith. Fr. Marcel likes to repeat this 'onita:

"You walked from people to people. From country to country you moved but from your Lord you moved not; and in every country you passed by, you deposited the treasure of life."²⁹

And like those merchants of whom we have spoken about, they traded, paying their blood... we sing Tuesday mornings (1st 'onita): "Martyrs, you have been merchants, and behold! your treasure is in heaven; you bought the jewel with the blood of your necks."³⁰ Besides, martyrs continue even now a days their mission though they are in their tombs. The divine power works through them. The first onita of Friday morning sounds as follows:

Blessed be the hidden power dwelling in the bones of the martyrs! Indeed they are deposited in their tombs and they cast devils out of the world; through their teaching they made vain the whole error of the idols and they visit secretly the creation and teach to worship you, Lord, because you are alone (the Lord).³¹

So martyrs are giving the supreme testimony of fidelity to Christ. This is common to all Churches. Their title is higher than that of saint or doctor of the church. We sing Tuesday evenings:

“with a loud voice exclaimed the martyrs in front of the judges saying: we will not deny Christ, who for our sake tasted death.”³²

That is why they are considered as the image of a glorified saint. Martyrdom is seen as consequence of their full Christian life, the other cases are exception, e.g. Gustazad. Anyhow any holiness is a martyrdom either of blood or of spirit: there are the hidden martyrs (Sahde d-Kasyuta) says a known expression. Christ is their example. He opened the way to the kingdom, and on his traces walked the martyrs.³³ But they are also our fathers, and they show how precious the faith is. The Church honours them in their own corner of the temple (the martyrium, beth Sahde) because they stimulate her and pray for her.

The above mentioned Isai who was professor of the school of Qtesiphon in the sixth cent. sums up the reason of honouring martyrs. He says that we make their memory in order,

to keep fast the hope of the faithful, to imitate their virtues, and so to share their crown. In mass we commemorate the death of Christ (I Cor 11,26) as Jesus wanted (Lc 22,10).

We remember them and honour them for our own benefit; in this way their life for Christ become fervent (Litt. boiling) in us³⁴ and like them we despise temporary life.³⁵ We celebrate them on Friday after Easter though they suffered, speaking of mar Shimouh bar Sabba' and companions, on Good Friday, because it is impossible to do that on the same

Friday; but it is still the same day of the week: they are glorified on the day of the death of Christ for whom they died.

We can conclude now that the spirituality of martyrdom is an essential part of our spirituality, because it is the highest way of imitating Christ and of being the sons of these glorious fathers: martyrs in our souls, but even in our bodies, as Isai concludes his treatise inviting all to live in patience, dying daily as heroes, in constant poverty, like Christ, helping the poor and dying of this world.³⁶ All this in the context of liturgical year, entered on the passion and resurrection of Jesus, as we have seen.

7. Culture for faith

One of the characteristic concerns of our Church was and is culture; the perception of the importance of culture is something constant; without it no intellectual or spiritual formation is made possible. That is why from the very beginning we find local schools: in Edessa with Bardaisan (220) where Saint Lucian, the founder of the school of Antioch was a student in Nisibis with Great saint Ephrem (373) who transferred his school to Edessa after 363 A. D. in Nisibis again from 457 with Narsai (502), expelled from Edessa, and the series continues: Mar Aba, mid 6th cent. founded the school of Ctesiphon, and later on in every monastery and every diocese there was a school; it is true not all of equal renown as that of Nisibis, the first Christian university in the world as Most Rev. Msgr. Mattam likes to call it³⁷. These schools were at the service of comprehensive Christian formation, theoretical and practical, in the Word of God, in worship, in the defense of faith, in spiritual science, in theological insight etc. Our spiritual heritage is so enlightened with these specialised works. And I do not speak

of the contribution of our schools to culture in general, such as transmission of Greek knowledge to the Arabs: philosophy, science, medicine, history, mathematics, etc... beside their own creation in these fields also. Syrian literature is indispensable for those who want to study history. There is properly a syriac philosophy, such as the works of Timothy the Great.³⁸ And this with all the texts we have lost down the centuries. The second Kaliph Umar used to say about Christians: build their churches and schools. And when there was any invasion the first thing that Christians would do was to hide or carry out as much as possible the Church and school manuscripts because they knew that what the invader did first was to destroy these books.

It would be too long to speak in details on all these branches of religious sciences. But of all of them there is one characteristic note—they are made for the formation of the people of God, as R. Macina pointed out.³⁹ And this is quite understandable. Bible is the source of our spirituality, hence the biblical commentaries; then according to Theodore of Mopsuestia, to participate in liturgy one must understand it: hence wonderful theological and liturgical commentaries in our liturgy. Our faithful were living among moslems, and they had to answer the reasons of their faith and hope, hence numerous apologies of Christian faith they had in order to explain faith and teach it to faithful in its purity, and many treatises in dogmatic theology they had in order to nurture their brothers with the spiritual life, and mystical treatises of many of our authors who had influence even outside Syrian area, such as Ephraem and Isaac of Niniveh.

8. Conclusion

How could we now sum up some of the characteristics of our spirituality as ecclesial spirituality?

1. The first aspect of this spirituality is that it is comprehensive and living. It takes into account the multiple activity and fosters the life of the Church; the deepening of the mystery of Christ in the heart of her sons through intense spiritual life is a start for going out to share this bliss; hence the missionary spirit is linked even with monastic life. On the other hand, ascetical and liturgical lives are illuminated by scientific preparation, etc.

2. The second conclusion is that this spirituality is essentially evangelical. Gospel and the mystery of Christ as an expression of the Trinity in God's people are considered as the background and the *criterium* of spiritual life. It is a matter of fact that our spirituality has the Bible as its source of inspiration; this did not impede our authors to reflect on and record their spiritual experience, but the word of God remained the last *criterium*, and the service of the life of the Church the main goal, as I have pointed out several times.

3. The third conclusion is that this spirituality is traditional and creative. This means that our forefathers had the sense of history and understood well that Christian religions is a datum, a fact to be received in obedience, and a treasure to be discovered with insight. Begin with what is there. The idea of accepting tradition is so fundamental; but this same idea is stimulating to the development in a coherent way; these two movements, that is receiving the past and developing it guarantee two complementary notes, authenticity and openness. So our spiritual authors studied, for ex. Evagrius, to take an example of openness, but they assimilated him to their way of thinking and to the need of their spiritual life; the same thing is to be said in theology, when for ex. Timothy the Great quotes saint Gregory of Naziansus calling him 'our Father Gregory'.

4. Fourth conclusion. This spirituality is based on sound foundations and used sound means, that is the scientific work. Our fathers were against any superficial approach of Christian life, because this later is so dear, precious and important. Easy solutions for them were lazy solutions; in other words these were not solutions at all. This is an example how a true renaissance cannot be hoped by the Chaldean Church without going more

and more to tradition, re-discovering the rich heritage received though partly from the fathers, editing it, assimilating it. This is not at all against pastoral work. Science, spiritual science, is the serious basis of pastoral formation. As for the past culture was in the service of faith, the same thing must be now. When we rebuild, we must put good foundations.

By Patros YOUSIF

FOOT NOTES :

1. See *Synodicon Orientale*, ed. and French tr, by J. B. Chabot, Paris 1902.
2. The Huttama (sealing, or the last blessing), in the Chaldean or Syro-Oriental Mass, Missal ed. 1971, Baghdad, 1971 p. 50; and the Syro-Malabar Qurbana, ed. 1985, p. 69 of the English translation. But the expression is very frequent in our liturgy.
3. BADGER, *The Nestorians* (above n. 28), p. 199.
4. BADGER, *ib.* p. 204.
5. BADGER, *ib.* p. 324.
6. BADGER, *ib.* 328. Badger falsely translates *syamida* with "laying on of hands". It means indeed "Laying on of hand" (in singular). The rubric p. 327 says: "Then the bishop shall lay his right hand upon those to be ordained, and ex ending his left hand in a supplicating posture, he shall say in a low voice:" p. 327 (before the general formula) and p. 329 (before the proper formula for the priestly ordination.)
7. BADGER, *The Nestorians* (above n. 28), p. 327-28; 334 (only the *incipit*), and 345.
8. BADGER, *ib.* p. 328-29.
9. BADGER, *ib.* p. 334-35.
10. BADGER, *ib.* p. 335.
11. See above, n. 40.
12. BADGER (above n. 28), p. 346.
13. *Ktaba d-Takse Kumraye, The Book of the Pontifical Rites of the Chaldeans*, Rome 1957, p. 30.

14. *Klaba d-Takse Kumraye* (above. 46), p. 303-304.
15. See G. NEDUNGATT, *The Covenanters of the Early Syriac Speaking Church*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39, 1973, pp. 191-215; 419-444.
16. A. VOEOEBUS, *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Macropaedia* 6, 1974, p. 133; see also VOEOEBUS, *History of Asceticism*, in *Bibliography, Studies*, below.
17. Edited with English transl. by A. MINGANA, in *Woodbrook Studies Vol. VII*, Cambridge 1934.
18. See G. CHEDIATH, *The Christology of Mar Babai The Great*, OIRSI 49, Kottayam 1982.
19. French Translation by J. B. CHABOT in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 2-5, 1897-1900, and separately published, Paris 1901.
20. See above 1.8. and note 23.
21. On the daily life of the Chaldean monks in its flourishing time, see O. HENDRICKS, *La vie quotidienne des moines Chaldéens*, in *l'Orient Syrien* 5, 1960, p. 293 ff. and 401 ff. On our monasticism as a whole, see V. van VOSSEL, *Caldeo, monachesimo*, in *Dizionario degli Estitute di Perfezione* vol. II, Alba, 1974, Col. 1709-1713; and P. YOUSIF, *ormisda*, ib IV, 1980, col. 8 9-830.
22. See L. SAKO, *Lettre Christologique du Patriarche Syrien Oriental Iso'yahb II de Gdala* Etude, traduction et édition critique Rome 1983.
23. See at the end of this study the *select bibliography* on the missionary enterprise.
24. See BEDJAN, *Breviarium* (above n. 27), p. 355*. Engl. transl. from M. MACLEAN, *East Syrian Daily Offices*, London 1894, p. 115.
25. ISHAI, *Traité sur les Martyrs*, Edition and French Transl. by A SCHER in *Patrologia Orientalis* VII, 1909, p. 21; Engl. transl. by P. YOUSIF, here.
26. ISHAI (above n. 61), p. 22.
27. ISHAI, *ib*, pp. 22-3 (Engl. tr. here by P. YOUSIF).
28. See BEDJAN...*Breviarium* (above n. 27), p. 369* (Engl. tr. by P. YOUSIF).
29. BEDJAN... (above 27), p. 354* (Engl. Tr. by P. YOUSIF)
30. ID. p. 354* (Engl. tr. P. YOUSIF).
31. ID. p. 367* (Id).
32. ID. p. 352* (Id).
33. ID. p. 364* (Friday Ramsha).
34. ISHAI (above n. 61), p. 25.
35. *Ib*. p. 26.
36. *Ib*. p. 50-51.
37. Abraham MATTAM, Mar, The School of Nisibis-Edessa: First Theological University in Christendom, in *Christian Orient* 6, 1985, pp. 30-39.
38. See H. CHEIRHO, *Dialectique du langage sur Dieu. Lettre de Timothée I (728-823) à Serge. Etude, traduction et édition critique*. Rome 1983.
39. R. MACINA, L'homme à l'école de Dieu. D'An ioche a Nisibe: profil herméneutique, théologique et kérygmétique du mouvement scoliaste nestorien in *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 32, 1982, 86-124; 263-301; 33, 1983.

Book Reviews

Placid J. Podipara CMI (1899-1985) The Canonical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church. edited by Fr. X. Koodapuzha, OIRSI, 1986. pp.151. Price Rs.30/- abroad \$ 5.00

Vatican II has taught us that the Catholic Church is a communion of Churches which are equal in rights and obligations. The individuality of every Church is to be jealously safeguarded and fostered if the Catholic Church were to project its true nature. While they are identical in faith, sacraments and government, these Churches differ in their theology, spirituality, liturgy and discipline. Discipline, therefore, is an essential part of the individuality of every Church. If, therefore, we have to understand the individuality of the Syro-Malabar Church, we have necessarily to understand its discipline and legal system. This is constituted by the general laws as well as the particular laws.

The Syro-Malabar Church, unfortunately, because of the historic vicissitudes, had not made any research in this matter. Rev. Fr. Placid Podipara CMI, the pioneer in this field of work, who had already published the canonical sources of the Syro Malankara Church for the Papal Commission, supplies this lacuna by presenting us with *The canonical sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. In the beginning, a comprehensive vision of the Seleucian Church which the Syro-Malabar Church considered as a sister church is given; the history of the Syro-Malabar Church in the XVII, XVIII, and XIX centuries is then discussed. In the VII chapter Canonical sources of the Post XVI century are given. The author studies the sources with documentary evidence and as such the book is very helpful to those who look into the genuine individuality of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The introduction to the book by Bishop Mar George Punnakottil and 'a profile of Fr. Placid Podipara' by Fr. James Kurianal are both helpful to the reader and enhances the value of the book.

The Editor has to be congratulated for making available to the public such a basic work on the individuality of the Syro-Malabar Church. The book is a great help to students of Canon Law, as they have now a sure foundation from an authoritative person to rely on.

I am happy to recommend this book to all students of the Syro-Malabar Church and to those who want to know about this Church.

J. Koikakudy

Varghese Pathikulangara, Church in India, Kottayam 1986, P. 75, Price Rs. 12.00

This book is a collection of articles published by the author in different periodicals, and deals with some important topics which are of great interest to those who try to theologize in the Indian context and to form an Indian spirituality and genuine Indian Christian religious life.

Spirituality is necessarily bound up with one's proper ecclesial and liturgical traditions. Since there are three different ecclesial traditions in India it is improper to propose a single Indian spirituality. Each Church with her own liturgical traditions has to integrate herself in her own way to the life-situations in India.

In the Catholic Church which is a communion of Churches, each particular Church enjoys the right to coexist with other sister Churches with equal dignity and should be allowed to fulfil her obligations especially in the field of evangelical mission. It is well to note in respect to the theologization in the Indian context that the two Oriental Churches with their own proper theologies are more appealing to the Indian minds since India with its proper philosophies and religious thinking is an oriental country.

The contention that St. Thomas Christians came to the Catholic communion in the sixteenth century is simply false. They were subjugated under the Latin rule in that century and thenceforth suffered suppression. In our present endeavour to rediscover our identity and spiritual fecundity, the restoration of liturgy is a very important step. It is lamentable that a negligible fraction of the Church constitutes a stumbling block in this attempt.

History bears witness to the fact that monastic communities played a major role in the formation of the liturgy, spirituality and theology of their respective Churches. The Syro-Malabar religious congregations also should be able to experience, live and assimilate the authentic liturgy of their Church and dedicate themselves to the study and proclamation of her original apostolic life. The present crisis consists chiefly in their refusal or failure to rise up to their vocation.

The author of this book elucidates these and related subjects in their genuine perspectives.

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

George Every, Richard Harries, Kallistos Ware, (ed.) The Time of the Spirit: Readings through the Christian Year (St. Vladimir's Séminary Press, Crestwood) N. Y. 1984, p. IX + 259, pb. \$ 4.95

It is a collection of Christian writings down through the centuries. It contains selections from the catholic, orthodox and protestant writers. The editions too are representing these three major christian groups. Hence it is an ecumenical venture. It is published simultaneously in England (SPCK) and the U. S. A. The book is arranged according to the ecclesiastical calendar, beginning with September and ending with August. There is a specific topic for each month and the selections are illustrative of the topic. In September it is Creation; October - the human person. November, the coming glory, later the cycle of Christ's Incarnation (December), Baptism of Christ (January), Prayer and preparation for lent (February)... Christ's passion, death, resurrection ascension, pentecost, Trinity etc. finally in August the final glory of the coming age.

Within each month some of the more prominent saints or their works are featured. This book could be used in meditation, prayer or study in

accordance with the liturgical spirit. At the end of the book the sources are indicated. And a good bibliography too is given. It is a new attempt. Many can go forward in this line in finding out our common Christian tradition. We wish that many more books of this type may appear so that the Christians of the various traditions can reflect on the fulness of the Church's experience and prayer.

G. Chediath

Anglican – Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984. London: SPCK (Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DU), 1985, 73 pages, ppb. £ 2.50 net.

This publication is very useful for all Churches and Christians engaged in the ecumenical dialogue. The Anglican Communion and the Eastern Orthodox Church have achieved, in their dialogue, considerable results and have thus fostered their communion in many regards, although their ecclesial unity seems not to be beforehand. The Dublin document of 1984 is the fruit of eight years of prayer and labour. It deals with the mystery of the Church, the faith in the Trinity, prayer and holiness, worship and tradition. It clearly says where the Churches in dialogue already agree and where their position is still divergent. But they are looking into the future hopefully stating in the last para of the epilogue that "None of the points of disagreement ... is to be regarded as insoluble, but each is to be regarded as a challenge to this Commission ..., to advance more deeply in its understanding of the truth".

We are grateful for two appendices, too, presenting the texts of the Moscow Agreed Statement of 1976 and the Athens Report of 1978 in which the orthodox position on the ordination of women to the priesthood as well as the Anglican position regarding this issue are rendered. The Orthodox position is exactly the same as that of the Catholic Church and of any other apostolic Church holding to the faith of the early Church; the paper clearly says that "It is important to distinguish between innovations and creative continuity of Tradition. We Orthodox see the ordination of women, not as part of the creative continuity, but as a violation of the apostolic faith and order of the Church" (p. 60).

A thorough study of the Dublin Agreed Statement of 1984 could serve well as a basis for ecumenical conversations, especially in South India between the Catholic and Orthodox Syrian Churches on the one side and the Marthoma Syrian Church and the Church of South India on the other side.

J. Madey

Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch, The Resurrection and the Modern Man. Translated by Stephen Bigham. With a foreword by Olivier Clement. Crestwood, New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985, 96 pages, 5.75.

This is a translation from the French original. The author is well-known in ecumenical circles. He is the present Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All-the-East. He is not only a distinguished churchman but also a theologian endowed with a profound sense of his tradition.

The book under review proves it more than once. It is small, filled with remarkable thoughts. They are all woven around the theme of the Resurrection. Indeed this is the life centre of the Christian East.

The first chapter, entitled "The New Creation" was actually the opening address the Patriarch, then Metropolitan in Syria, delivered at the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, Sweden, 1968. It focusses on the paschal event of Christ, who brings about the new creation. It is prophetic because God stands and acts always before us. It becomes our own today and so every day of our lives through the energy of the Holy Spirit. It can only be lived within the Church. In this way the deification of man goes on progressing.

Then the author takes up the challenge of the modern man, and his renewal through the Resurrection. Such a renewal is first and foremost that of the Church. The latter needs above all a renewal of theology, not a sociological transformation. Ignatius IV's main emphasis is to present Christ's Resurrection as continuous and as the final explanation of the meaning of death.

Resurrection is fulfilment as Christ himself promised, fulfilment of creation, fulfilment of the Old Testament, fulfilment of Christ's own life, fulfilment in the Christian's own life. Our belonging to the Risen Lord is all the more real because it is mysterious, it is a spiritual reality. The invisible judges the visible. In this way and in this way only can we "know Him and the power of His Resurrection" (Phil. 3 10).

Moreover only the baptized Christian can be assimilated and possessed by the ever living Christ. In our death we pass for the last time into the Resurrection, our everyday experience is confirmed for ever.

The Patriarch concludes with a fine and articulate analysis of the relation that is and should be between the reality of the Resurrection and our world today. Christians are to be more than ever before witnesses to the Resurrection in their life and thinking, witnesses to the new age it leads to, the constant paschal struggle it signifies, the liberation it brings about to all those who accept Him.

E. R. Hambye S. J.

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NEW BOOKS

1. Dr. Placid J. Podipara, cmi, *The Latin Rite Christians of Malabar*, 1986
2. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara, cmi, *Church in India*, 1986
3. Dr. Thomas Vellilamthadam, *A Trojan Horse? The Unchristian Role of the Latin Church*, 1986
4. Dr. Geevarghese Chediath and Dr. Thomas Vellilamthadam (eds.), *Ecumenism in Danger*, 1986

News and Comments

A JARRING NOTE MADE MORE JARRING

– An expose of the Orthodox Syrian statements on Pope John Paul II –

Introduction:

The Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala, under the Catholicos of Kottayam, had the dubious distinction of striking the only jarring note during the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to India. Certain parts of the two public statements, made under their auspices, relating to the Pope, make painful reading. The first of these, which is good in parts, was the Address of Welcome presented to the Pope during his visit to Kerala, by the Catholicos, Mar Thoma Mathews I. THE HINDU and THE INDIAN EXPRESS, prominent English dailies in India, had commented that this Welcome Address had struck a “jarring” note. They had also pointed out that the Catholicos of Kottayam was trying to equate his own church with the Catholic Church. Malayala Manorama, the popular daily, largely responsible for the consolidation of the Catholicos party in the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) church, showed commendable wisdom in suppressing the offensive passages in the speech of the Catholicos. Certain Orthodox publications, such as The Church Weekly and Orthodox Voice, too, were highly critical of the jarring note in this speech. Their view was widely shared by many in the Orthodox Syrian church as well as outside it.

The second public statement from the Orthodox Syrian group appeared in the March issue of “The Star of The East”, “an ecumenical quarterly(?) published under the editorial responsibility of Metropolitan Dr. Paulose Gregorios of Delhi.” The editor of the Star of the East, piqued by the hostile reactions to the Catholicos’s speech, wrote an apologia under the title, “The Jarring Note”. In this he mounts an unfair attack on the Catholic Church and its head, Pope John Paul II. This rather crepitant exercise has made the first jarring note more jarring!

The Orthodox Welcome Address to the Pope is widely believed to have been the handiwork of Metropolitan Dr. Paulose Gregorios. The editorial, too, in the “Star of the East” must be his own. Both carry the signature tone of Dr. Paulose Gregorios, but they cannot be dismissed as an individual’s idiom of ecumenism.

The Jarring note in the speech of the Catholicos pertains chiefly to expressions such as these: “If only all could stop sheep – stealing and proselytism! We were told that the Second Vatican Council had discouraged Roman Catholic proselytism among the Orthodox But these prelates continue using questionable methods to draw our people away to your church.”

The efforts to equate the Orthodox section in the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) church with the Catholic Church are reflected in passages such as these: "... today the successor of St. Thomas is privileged to welcome the successor of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul." "There is so much need and suffering in the world. Millions go hungry We could work together to serve these We should work together to make the earth free from nuclear war Space must be used for peaceful purpose We can work together in this field..."*

The Star of the East editorial not only tries to justify the allegations in the Catholicos's Welcome Address, but also adds some new items, including a personal jibe on Pope John Paul II. These demand an answer; I shall deal with them item by item.

I

Sheep - Stealing : Dr. Paulose Gregorios justifies the jarring note in the Welcome Address as a legitimate reaction to the sheep-stealing and proselytism by Catholics and the questionable methods used by them to draw members of the Orthodox Syrian church, with the blessing of the Pope.

(a) The first thing I want to say in answer to this charge is that the Orthodox Syrian church, too, is in this business of sheep-stealing: There are several instances personally known to me in Kerala, but here I shall limit myself to two instances outside Kerala, one in Trichinopoly and the other in South Canara, where some Catholics of the Latin rite were received into the Orthodox Church. Is the question, then, my lord, merely one of numbers? Is the Metropolitan worried only about the fact that while there is a steady flow out of his own church (into the Catholic church as well as the Pentecostal groups), there is only a trickle into it?

(b) The movement of individuals and groups from one church to another has always put a strain on the relations between churches. From the time divisions started within the Church, there have been cases of individuals and groups changing over from one church to another. The churches that lose their members are always tempted to impugn the objective rightness of the motives and even the subjective honesty of the converts. This is exactly what Dr. Gregorios is doing when he accuses Catholics of using doubtful means to wean away the Orthodox. Phrases like "sheep-stealing" and "proselytism" only show his anger and desperation.

No one will support the conversion of non-Christians or the change from one church to another by Christians for wrong reasons or through unfair means. The fundamental question is whether an individual has the right to exercise his God-given liberty to re-think his church affiliation. If one is con-

* No better comment can be made on the pretensions of smaller churches than the one implied in G. K. Chesterton's parable.

An elephant, meeting a rabbit on his way, looked at him and exclaimed, "you are so small!". The rabbit, raising himself on his hind legs, said, "you see, I have not been too well these days!"

vinced that the universal church subsists in the Catholic Church, however much Christian reality there may be outside her, and that for Christian unity communion with the See of Rome is essential ecclesially, should he not trustfully obey his conscience? If you accept the principle that you should live and die in the particular religion or ecclesial group in which you happen to be born, we would all have been Jews or heathens!

(c) After all, Dr. Paulose Gregorios, whose family and parish had affiliation with the Patriarch's party, felt it was right for him to change over to the party under the Catholicos of Kottayam. I am sure he had valid reasons and the right motivation for doing so. How can the right to change be denied to others? To raise an accusing finger against those who leave the Orthodox church and join the Catholic Church and to declare that they are "bought" by the Catholics through questionable means or that they have been "stolen" by the Catholics, is unjust, unfair and unchristian. Are the people private properties of the bishops, without authentic personalities of their own? Are the Orthodox laymen like dumb sheep put up for sale in the market? There may be people who become Christian or Catholic through unclear or mixed motives. God will judge those who do even right things for wrong reasons but an individual's conscience is never transparent to another human being and therefore cannot be judged by him. Who am I or Metropolitan Gregorios to sit in judgement over the motives and conscience of all other people? A president of the World Council of Churches is not, after all, the President of the Immortals!

(d) In point of fact, there are many who, for wrong reasons and motives, continue to live in the churches and groups into which they happen to be born! They do not move because they are afraid of losing the positions of power and prestige they enjoy, or worried about insecurity, or social needs, or the hatred of the tribe and several other worldly restraints. For each person leaving the Orthodox church in Kerala for "wrong reasons" there will be at least ten remaining with them for equally wrong reasons or because of mixed worldly motives. It might be a good thing to remain where you are, but it is a far better thing to move on to where you ought to be.

II

A more profitable exercise for the Orthodox Syrian leaders (including Dr. Paulose Gregorios) will be to ask themselves why there is an exodus from their own church. I shall just touch on a few prominent areas where the thinking members of the Orthodox Syrian church might feel that their church's position is untenable or at least highly embarrassing.

(a) Take, for instance, the present attitude of the Orthodox Syrian church to the primacy of Peter. I do not intend going into the New Testament interpretations of Cullman and others, nor do I wish to enter the areas of Church history and the witness of the Fathers. What I wish to affirm here is simply that Dr. Paulose Gregorios and his church just cannot deny Petrine primacy without repudiating their own liturgical heritage, sacramentals, common prayer, Penkitho and canons of the Syrian tradition. Unless the Orthodox Syrian church undertakes a Reform (parallel to that of the Mar Thoma church), getting rid of the numerous prayers and affirmations undergirding the primacy of Peter, their prayer books will contradict their stance and will embarrass every thinking member of their church.

(b) The awkwardness of their position has been accentuated by the recent discovery of the Catholicos party that the Catholicos is sitting on the throne of St. Thomas. In support of this position and as a ploy to repudiate the Patriarch's authority (who claims to be the successor of St. Peter in Antioch), the Orthodox Syrian church has started talking about the equality of all Apostles and the equality of the throne of Thomas to that of Peter. In 1982 the Orthodox Syrian Church celebrated in a big way the 70th anniversary of transferring the throne of the Catholicos of the East from the Middle East to Kerala. Fr. P. Duprey had come from Rome as the Papal representative for these celebrations. Many members of the Orthodox church had then asked why this throne had to be set up in Kerala (that, too, in a dubious manner) if the throne of St. Thomas was already here. Obviously the throne of St. Thomas was an after-thought. These questions still continue to worry many of their people. Their confusion is made worse by the occasional asides of certain Catholicos party theologians who claim that theirs is an autocephalous church. There is nothing to show that the founding fathers of the Catholicos party had dreamed of anything more than a church following West Syrian traditions, with affiliation to the Patriarch of Antioch, but with autonomy in all internal affairs.

(c) A third question that could breed confusion in Orthodox Syrian minds is the attitude of their church to the council of Chalcedon. They had taken up the anti-Chalcedonian stance when they had accepted the Patriarch of Antioch as the supreme head of their church. Today the Patriarch has revised his attitude to Chalcedon and its decrees and made a historic joint statement with the Pope. Chalcedon is no more the stumbling block that it was. The Orthodox Syrian church is now left in the lurch and they do not know how to react to the development, except to cling on to the anti-Chalcedonian position. What worries the members of the Orthodox Syrian church is that while their church had accepted every detail of the liturgical, historical, canonical and theological position of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, and still try to cling on to those, the Patriarch himself is moving away from some of those positions!

(d) The status of the Patriarch has become another area of confusion for the Orthodox layman. While the Constitution of the Orthodox Syrian church in Kerala depicts the Patriarch of Antioch as the supreme head of their church, they do not recognize the present Patriarch (Ignatius Zakka I) as the duly constituted Patriarch of Antioch. All the Oriental churches, the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Catholic and Protestant churches recognize Ignatius Zakka I as the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, but Dr. Paulose Gregorios and his church refuse to recognize him!

(e) Peace is another area of confusion in Orthodox Syrian minds and the major credit for this goes to Dr. Paulose Gregorios, a leading light of the Moscow-inspired World Peace Council. While certain Orthodox leaders in Kerala are constantly devising plans to solve the problems of nuclear and space wars, they do everything to prevent a peaceful settlement of their disputes with their brethren of the Patriarch's party in Kerala! In fact the Orthodox are trying to grab even the parish churches built up by generations of people devoted to the Patriarch and where they continue to have an overwhelming majority. To some of the Orthodox leaders "peace" seems to have become an instrument of war, in the Orwellian sense!

I do not wish to add to this brief list of areas of confusion in the Orthodox Syrian church in Kerala today. All I want to suggest is that there may be compelling reasons prompting the members of the Orthodox Syrian church to re-think their church affiliation. If in the process of their agonizing re-appraisal they turn towards the Catholic church, why blame them? The search for unity and meaning is everyman's concern. To heap abuses on the Catholic church or the Pope is no remedy; it is a self-defeating exercise.

III

(a) *Uniatism and Vatican II* : Dr. Paulose Gregorios has his own interpretation of the history of St. Thomas Christians in India. His view is that the children of St. Thomas were one flock until the 16th century when the uniat Roman Catholic church was formed in Kerala. It is true that the St. Thomas Christians were undivided until the 16th century. It is also true that this undivided church had used the East Syrian liturgy and had links with the church of Babylon and was in communion with Rome. The Portuguese, known to be under the Pope, were welcomed by the St. Thomas Christians and the parting of ways came only when the former pursued their Latinising efforts and began to interfere in the internal administration of the local church. At the historic Coonen Cross, the oath taken by the Syrian Christians was not against the Pope, but against the "Paulists" (that is, the Latin Jesuits of St. Paul's seminary).

Subsequently the Carmelite missionaries attempted the re-integration of St. Thomas Christians. If the Syrians had been allowed to use their own liturgy and to be ruled by their own Bishops, the St. Thomas Christians in India might have yet been one. Many Syrian Prelates had attempted to achieve these, but in vain. Mar Ivanios, over half a century ago, was able to achieve what many leaders of his church in the past had failed to achieve. He had started negotiations with Rome with the concurrence of and on behalf of his brother bishops but they later resiled. The positive value of Mar Ivanios's vision can be fully appreciated only against its historical setting.

(b) Dr. Paulose Gregorios mentions Vatican II as though this Council has taken a stand against receiving the Orthodox into the Catholic church. Vatican II certainly shows a clear appreciation of the patrimony of the Eastern churches, but it also declares that "the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church subsists in the Catholic church . . . Nevertheless many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity . . . the Spirit stirs up desires and actions in all of Christ's disciples in order that all may be united as Christ ordained in flock under one shepherd."

It is true that in the ecumenical movement today the accent is on the re-integration of churches, but there cannot be any regulation forbidding the people of God to act according to their conviction and conscience in their church affiliation. Vatican II has said nothing meant to prevent anyone who seeks the privilege of communion in the Catholic church.

IV

The Ethiopian connection :

The major part of the Star of the East editorial is devoted to allegations of Catholic misdeeds in Ethiopia. The main points raised by Dr. Paulose Gregorios about the present are:

The present Pope encourages sheep-stealing in Ethiopia. The appointment of a cardinal in the small Catholic church there proves this. The cardinalate was "an honour to the despicable activity of proselytism" The Roman Catholic Church is "passionately opposed" to the present communist regime in Ethiopia, but at the same time they are giving massive aid to the famine-stricken people of Ethiopia and their motive, of course, must be proselytism!

Dr. Paulose Gregorios has first-hand knowledge of Ethiopia because he was formerly a devoted secretary of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selasse and now an ardent supporter of the new revolutionary government. One can understand his dislike for the Catholic Cardinal, but why does he and those of his thinking oppose even famine relief?

Let us look at another revealing report on Ethiopia from a well-known writer, Prof. Paul Johnson:* "Most pathetic case of all, perhaps, is *Ethiopia*, the only African country to retain its Christianity from Antiquity, the last monarchy to fall victim to colonialism, the first to have its independence restored: A strange, colourful, primitive and vulnerable survival from the pre-modern world. There was considerable freedom, and some progress, under the old Emperor Haile Selasse, who survived until 1974, when the Soviets caused him to be smothered to death, and installed a puppet Marxist regime in his place. The worst that could be said of the old Emperor's censorship is that he cut the death-scene of King Duncan from performances of Macbeth; after his fall, Shakespeare was not performed at all. *Now ten years later, Ethiopia is stricken by civil and external wars and is enduring the worst famine in its history, created at least in part by deliberate decisions of its Marxist rulers - thus following the tradition of Lenin and Stalin, who used the famine weapon to destroy their internal enemies. Soviet air-craft are employed to bomb the refugees from the famine-stricken areas.*"

Prof. Paul Johnson's comments will probably help us to understand the real reason why Dr. Paulose Gregorios is opposed to famine-relief in Ethiopia! As for the Ethiopian Cardinal, all I can think of is of pleading with the Secretariat for Unity to put in a word to the Holy Father to seek prior approval for his list of Cardinals from Dr. Paulose Gregorios, at least when it concerns countries that are ruled by "revolutionary governments" which he "passionately" supports.

V

(a) The Star of the East explains that the jarring note in the Kottayam address to the Pope was partly due to a "painful" episode in which three Roman Catholic bishops had tried to persuade the Catholicos to join the Roman Catholic Church. He would be made a Patriarch during the Pope's visit, they told him!

This is a highly dramatised and deliberately distorted version of a meeting of the Catholic Bishops and Orthodox church leaders in Kottayam. The initiative for this get-together was taken by Fr. Nirappel who was the convener of the St. Thomas Ecumenical church set up at Nilackal. (The editor's comment on Nilackal shows his blind prejudice. He says Fr Nirappel had "discovered" the Cross at Nilackal and adds that this had led to

* Oxford scholar, editor for many years of the prestigious British Weekly, The New Statesman, in an article in TRUTH, an inter-disciplinary Journal of Christian Thought, U. S. A.

"communal riots" in Kerala. It is true that R. S. S. leaders had made several provocative statements about Nilackal, but there were no communal riots at all. The positive side of Nilackal is that for the first time in history the Bishops of all the Episcopal churches came together to dedicate a church, which is jointly owned by all the churches in Kerala, including the Orthodox Syrian church.) Fr. Nirappel had clearly stated that the initiative for the meeting of Bishops was entirely his own, inspired by his Nilackal experience. The formal invitation was made by the Catholicos of Devalokam. But the Star of the East insists that it was done with the knowledge of the Vatican and the Pope! The finale is the revelation of the Star of the East that there was a tempting offer to the Catholicos by the Bishop Kunnassery (of the Knanaya Diocese). This, obviously, is a highly personalized vision.

It is rather strange, however, that such a candid expression of hope, made openly, should be interpreted as an evil design to tempt the Catholicos. After all, the Catholicos's Address to the Pope speaks of the "deep yearning for the unity" that was lost. If, then, an idea is put forward that in recovering that unity the Orthodox Syrian church could play a pivotal role and that all St. Thomas Christians in India could be united under one head, what is wrong with that? Is this not in harmony with the spirit of ecumenism? Why should such an offer cause pain to anyone? They will have, I am sure, their private prejudices and personal ambitions prompting them to change "perverse stance" into peevish stance.

(b) *"Pope of Kottayam"*

Dr. Paulose Gregorios surpasses himself with his interpretation of the Pope's parting words to the Catholicos. As he was taking leave of the Catholicos, the Pope turned to him and said, "I am the Pope of Rome, you are the Pope of Kottayam". This was no Parthian shot, but a good-humoured compliment. At least most people understood it that way. If, however, one tried to find any mischievous intent in it, it could perhaps be seen as a wry comment on the Catholicos's effort to equate his own small church with the Catholic Church. The equation between the Orthodox Syrian church and the Catholic Church (the Pope might seem to imply) is as the small town of Kottayam is to the "eternal" city of Rome. Metropolitan Gregorios, however, chooses to "discover" a sinister design in the Pope's words. According to him, the Pope was enticing the Catholicos by offering to elevate him to a position in India equal in dignity to that of the Pope! It is odd that the Pope should make such an epoch-making offer so casually. On the basis of his own twisted interpretation, the editor of the Star of the East gleefully asks, Is Pope John Paul II, then, a "shepherd-Stealer?" This disingenuous interpretation of the Pope's words by the Editor surely shows a sixth sense which (as Coleridge said about a brash and brazen critic) is very far from common sense. Prejudice indeed is the last ditch of pride!

(Note :- Frankly, I am unhappy about the polemical tone of this article. I felt that, that was necessary to set the record straight. This, however, is a first reaction. I am willing to enter into an extended ecumenical debate on the issues raised in this.)

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INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

PAURASTYA VIDYĀPĪTHAM organised a Theological Conference of unique importance. It was to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary in which Paurastya Vidyāpītham is established. The Seminary was started 25 years ago to give ecclesial formation to the candidates to Priesthood of the Oriental Churches in India.

The Conference was held on July 3-10, 1986. It is for the first time that a Conference of this kind is organised by the Catholic Orientals. It was a unique opportunity for members and scholars of different Catholic oriental Churches to come together and think together. The main areas of discussion were:- Ecclesiology, Liturgy, Spirituality, Pastoral care & Evangelisation, History and Ecumenism and Canon Law. Scholars of International repute presented papers on various topics. The main perspective of the Conference was "The Communion of Churches". Catholic Church is not Latin Church. There are various Churches in the Catholic Church. All are equal in dignity, right and obligation. The individuality of Churches and Communion of Churches go together. Ecclesiology, Theology, Liturgy, Spirituality, Canon Law etc. of a particular Church mark its individuality and identity.

Liturgical Spirituality and Pneumatology are Oriental characteristics. The Liturgy and Spirituality of the Apostolic Church of Thomas Christians of India have been latinised. The attempts of that Church to become what it ought to be has not been fully realised. The influence of the clergy and Hierarchs who have received latin formation pose obstacles to a genuine re-birth. An ecclesial formation according to her authentic traditions is the only solution to it.

Speakers on Spirituality presented the importance of mysticism and emphasised the need of reviving it.

Every Church is by nature missionary. It is a divine mandate and not a privilege or concession granted by any human person or any one church. Mar Antony Padiyara, Archbishop of Ernakulam, pictured clearly well the painful and unjust situation prevailing in India where the Catholic Oriental Churches are denied the right both of Pastoral care of their emigrants and of evangelisation. The Latin Church of India is denying these Oriental Churches a right given to them by Christ and guaranteed in the Indian Constitution.

The Latin Rule in India caused division in the Apostolic Church. As a result there exist in India various non-catholic Churches today. The attitude of the Latin Church in India towards the Catholic Orientals here is harmful to any serious ecumenism. It is time to act. Unless Rome acts in time, things will take very bad shape. With an appeal to Rome for action and to Oriental Hierarchs to be Oriental, the Conference concluded on 10th July.

The Conference began on 3rd July, the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle of India. His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, Archbishop of Trivandrum formally inaugurated the Conference. Among over 200 participants were 12 Hierarchs of Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches of India; over 100 priests from various dioceses; Major Superiors and representatives of men and

women religious congregations, and laity from different dioceses. About 350 major seminarians also participated in the Conference.

The historical drama played in the Card. Tisserant Auditorium made vivid the historical struggle of the Thomas Christians to regain her autonomy. The workshops gave the participants an opportunity to share their views and thus enrich their knowledge. The participants left the Conference Hall with a hope that this will be the beginning of a series of Conferences in the future.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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By

PLACID J. PODIPARA CMI (1899-1985)

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INTRODUCTION BY

MAR GEORGE PUNNAKOTIL

Placid J. Podipara (1899-1985) is the greatest authority on the canonical sources of the Syro-Malabar Church. He was Professor of this subject at the Pontifical Oriental Institute Rome and Consultor of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches for many years. Hence this book is quite authoritative and a precious source of the necessary data about the Syro-Malabar Church and its canonical sources.

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